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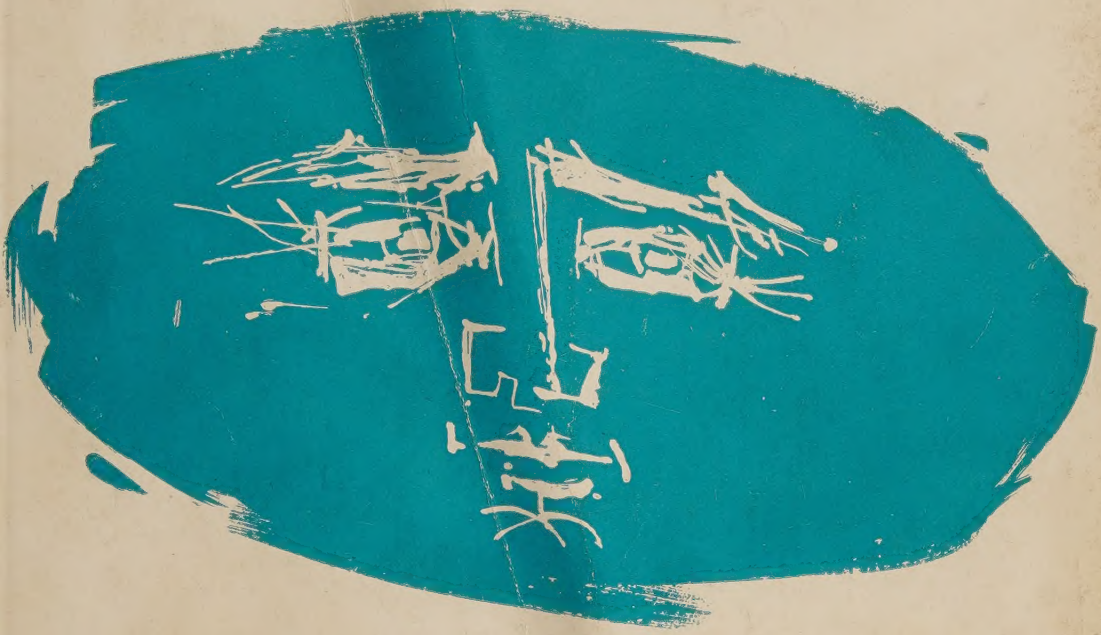

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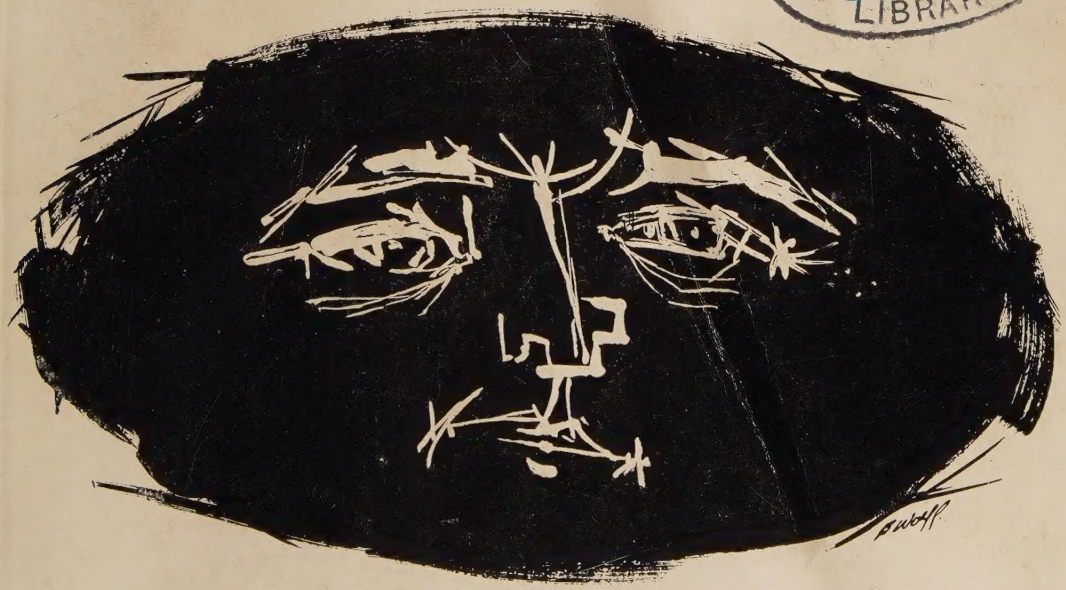

Contributions by:

Gregory Corso · Leslie Fiedler · George Garrett · Martin Green
V. S. Pritchett · Arnold Wesker · Anthony C. West · etc

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Moonglass

by Sydney Cheatle

Beard to blade and pat pat to rosy cheek, for Stephen Overtone is a handsome man. The future commander of inutile respect is risen from the ashes of adolescent smugmaking; face proud and friendless, the image of mind loneliness, he longs the mummy flesh to tear, the jaded tissues to probe, to rouse the sleeping snail of pre-ordained decay from its double decade slumber and taunt it with the majestic sarabande of life extended. Indefinable elation courses upward paperwarming the void of departed musk, glow of unwell being suffuses the castrated globe of educated oafery, titter titter pout the spoilt cheeks, blade to brain and pat pat to tousled heart for evenings joy is unmattering flight.

> –comparable to the state of near idiocy found in the aged and the young who are thus nearer to God.

What does it matter, where am I going, and why do I care? For me no synthetic escape to pursue, no turd-wife to dull, no craze art to obsess, no senile sin to fill the long night with perspiring thought. Tomorrow is another day coffeelike; yesterday is canonical fugue without memory in paperbacked strife for the isolation of the contented; I will look in the side leaved mirror and see?

> An interminable avenue of Stephen Overtones with shaven cheeks, receding hair. An alternating pattern of interlaced infinity see how they twitch. See how they droop, distort, wiggle their ears, stick out their tongues; slaves to the master matrix, vanquished victors of reflected space, their borrowed maws agape in servile repetition.

When O'Grady says 'Balls', down on your knees. The duplicate mouths open in silent unison but the voice of self is heard alone, hollow sounding in the bachelor furnished room. Vacant vision is forsaken for the squared and puttied eye of humanity, Actaeon without the carnal shudder; the live venison devoured without the pink and purple memory of consolation becomes the hunted hoof pursued by the horror of the greying bitch clad in plastic raincoat, middle age and overshoes.

Stupid woman why do you run? To cook an enormous mess of meat for your brutish mate perhaps, or duty-visit a decaying friend who awaits your monosyllabic mind with table laying eagerness. You are the mother of the people, the timeless log of patience and resignation; with outstretched limbs, thewed buttocks and harsh

cries you herald the uncaring joy and sorrow of the world, not knowing why, in the maze of your destiny. Why do you run? for there is no need of such lumbering reaction. Reason and calculation sit in nervous majesty on the vehicular throne in divided hate, mouthing their soprano-basso duet under the vigilant eye of the conductor, womb in hand, word ready. Stupid woman why do you walk in the rain? to keep a sodden tryst where there is no ironing-board or sink, to make illicit sounds on a lumpy mattress by a cardboard wall, covered by the short time mantle of change? Perhaps you scurry to church fearing to lose the eternal gift coupon that shimmers beyond your clammy grasp in its casket of guilt, stained with virtue. It may be that you are wise with the wisdom of the damned, which makes you run while I stand still in the fog of my knowledge, hating that which brings a glow to your folded neck. On your way brute-woman, for I do not loathe, but envy.

IWILLGONOWANDBLACKWALKTOGRUNDYS.

Only my friends are there so I will not enjoy it.

* * *

Eight o'clock and Grundys with suspended nose drip and snake hair tendrils. Open the door and conversation pauses for a moment, eyes roaming in desperation for a glimpse of a hallo face, let on that somebody knows I'm here, friendly wave at the barman's heedless back, jeesez I don't know a soul. Hostile student faces in the nook, twenty years ago I was a hostile student face in the nook, got to get out, face twitching in embarrassment, grope for the door to the mens room, smell of beersick, relief. In one of the cubicles a seated son of John McCormack is excreting vocally;

Just a lad of eighteen su-u-mmers,
and that no-owan can deny-y-y,
when he marched to death that morne-e-eng,
Barry held his head up high –

Tight vibrato belongs to the crap music hall, the original mud coloured cocoon who will shortly fall on the stage for your enjoyment, ladies and gentlemen, the show mumbles on.

In Mountjoy jail one Monda-a-y morni-i-ing –

– Shut up for the love of jasez – demands the adjacent cubicle in an accent half way between Ballyfermot and Rathgar.

– Can't a man be happy now, and the British gone forty years? rejoins the ankletrousered bard, emphasizing his point with a thunderous fart.

There is a disdainful silence followed by the tortured sound of a lavatory chain pulled lazily, contemptuously, as if to flush the conversation down the wastepipe. Ears are tuned for the gurgling finale, the chain rises and falls regularly, powerfully, uselessly: the tempo increases to one of urgency, finally to the frenzied coital rhythm of desperation: still the cylinder is tacit and the glorious opalescent victory dissolves into the piled heap of failure and degradation. There is a longer silence now, the silence of guilt; nervously the cubicle door opens and a face appears;

> A fat, red, middle-aged face distinguished only by the generous proportions of the nose, around which the features are grouped haphazardly as an empurpled afterthought. The expression alternates between shame and haughty dissimulation, as if to say – I'm not the sort of man who can leave a chain unpulled without feeling a little strange. On the other hand I can't very well stay here and pull the bloody thing all night, so the best thing to do is forget about it, it could happen to any man, and besides, I'm a little drunk.

Now to the washbasin to do the Pilate trick and everything is fine, whether it's raping a schoolgirl or just getting sick in the corner. It's all right sir, we understand, just wash your hands afterwards. Oh no sir, you must wash them in our handbasin, we were first you know, and we have the exclusive permission of the Inventor.

– Them chips is no good for the insides of any man, care for a drink? He is Northern, nail coarse and pore grimed, but his stocky figure is a welcome shield against the lolling Inquisition of the bar. There is no need to light an unwanted cigarette to cover the twitching lip, while hands for once, do not feel as large as tennis rackets to be stuffed angularly out of sight in trouser pockets, sweat softened.

Uaa-aagh hallo, my name is Homer Elbow and I'm over here in Ireland on a Guggenheim doing my thesis on the tie up between James Joyce, luggage labels, and the Roman Catholic Church. Oh yeah I think it's a wonderful country – no it's O.K. I'll pay, I know how things are with you people: you'll have a Jameson? thats fine – Uaa-aagh bartender two Jameson's please – a drop of

the hard stuff huh? I sure hope that you folks don't mind me joining your company but when you came in I saw your shabby clothes and I said to myself that these people are artists – no it's O.K. have a Lucky, I know how things are with you people. Uaa-aagh. Talking about people, you know my people are of Irish descent – you'd probably think this would not be so with a name like Elbow but there it is; Homer O'Flaherty dubh Elbow from county Tie-rone in enemy territory – uaaa-aaagh? You know talking about enemies I have always admired the Irish a great deal for their struggle against the British. Even when I was a kid in Skunk High I remember naming my favourite pet rat after Oliver Goldschmidt, of course the six counties should belong to us – you don't care? – you're always having your blarney. Uaa-aagh talking about drinking this is a wonderful pub you got here. It's got atmosphere; back home - No I insist on paying I know how things are – maybe you remember my friend Otis Shrunk who was over here on a Fulbright few years back, he said be sure go to Grundys you'll meet the real people there; I.R.A. men on leave after blowing up unoccupied drinking troughs, penniless artists and writers, and of course we artists should stick together sort of Transatlantic union of uaa-agh you'll pardon me if I slip off to the johns, haven't quite got used to this Irish Whiskey, back home I drink Schlitz, hope you'll excuse me getting sick like this, have another round on me, I know how things are – remember once Otis and I got through ten bottles of Scotch in Paris last – have another on me, I know how things are, be back in a moment, do not stray uaa-agh –

Hallo my name is Homer Elbow and I'm over here in Ireland on a Guggenheim doing my thesis on the phallic significance of the Gaelic round tower. I sure hope that you folks don't mind me joining your company, but I was with some friends at that table and they seem to have gone, no thats O.K. I'll pay, I know how things are. Ua-agh talking about sex –

Sure thats what yez are, a lot of intellectils and I'm only a barman. The only education I ever got was the thick end of me oul fella's shtrap whenever he had a few dhrinks on him and there was no one around to puck. For all that I know whats what and while you're here talking your bullshit about so and so this and such and such that, I'm puttin' enough by to buy and sell the lot of yez in ten years time. I know what you call me when me back is turned; Rasputin, and don't think I hadn't the common or

garden to find out what he was, bloody Russian spy. I know ye for what yez are; a lot of ninnies what never grew up, seen you make fools of yourselves every night of the week, heard all the things you whisper about each other, seen you moon like a lot of sick sheep over women that are F all use to man or beast. My Bridie may not have a notion about mothern art but by jasez she knows what her annie was made for, and knows a damn sight more than youse were ever taught in the University. Sure the women who come in here are makin' fools of ye, they don't care about art nor books, if they're not gettin' over their first love affair when they were seventeen, they're on the lookout for a man with a bit of standin' in the world. The things I've heard them say – I don't feel quite ready for fisical contect, or I want to be a great actress and such-like, It's all bull with a dose of convent thrainnin' thrown in. Sure where was ever the woman that didn't want love, isn't it what they're made for? And there they sit and you buying them oceans of gin and orange and talking your head off about Fryed or some such nonsense while all the time she's noddin' her head and hoping she'll get jarred enough to forget the first time she opened her legs for Him on the sofa in the parlour. Or else she's congratulatin' herself to be sittin' in a class bar like this surrounded by nits in cravats even though she's plain and stupid and never opens her gob except to say – how true – or – don't you think that – while you're doin' all the gab. Then you tell each other how intelligent she is, and you don't mind if she doesn't go to bed with you; egits the lot of ye dhrinkin' yourselves stupid every night and not a grain of talent among the lot of ye for youse never do anythin', just talk and criticize the work of better men than you who have done somethin'; children ye are, spoilt children. I'd rather dhrown me children than have them grow up to waste their lives and their parents money sittin' in a bar.

WHERE'S THE PARTY? WHERE'S THE PARTY? WHERE'S THE PARTY? WHERE'S –

– Well I should have thought that Adamov –

– Only a pit pony could live in a Frank Lloyd Wright house –

– absolute shit surrealism absolute shit –

– would you like to go now? –

– chord of the major seventh –

– what about our own Beckett? –

– Mies, Mies the mechanical man –

– absolute shit action painting absolute shit –

– I promise I won't do anything –
– now Roy Harris is the sole American –
– Ionesco is king –
– Buckminster Fuller –
– absolute shit abstract painting absolute shit –
– I'll pull it out before anything happens –
– someone like Gil Evans –
– Time gentlemen please –
– I'll finish your pint –
– catch the last bus –
– use a powder puff –
– WHERE'S THE PARTY? –
– oh balls –
where's the party? where's the party? where's the party? where's – At Megs? Meg doesn't drink any more, she's going to be married soon.

At Toms? Tom is in St. Mary's with T.B., we must visit him soon.

At Franks? We'll have to listen to his bagpipes all night.

John is a bollox, Mary has neighbours, Simon will borrow.

Where?

Let's have coffee and;

Think about it,
Talk about it,
Come to A DECISION.

Streets are wet and shiny, foundry reflecting bended neon and the thrusting organ of the night. As far as the beams end, so is our span unknowing of the great darkness on either side enveloping and soothing in awe inspiring ignorance; faces are creased, rimy, and red with the emptiness of wine, skin laughter-stretched over bones of insensitivity and new found nonchalance; servant is master, master is king, mans inevitable staircase repels the tranquil invader, it ascends higher and higher to the glorious depths of slack unconsciousness, memory dies its willing death, and civilisation pauses for a reeling moment on the precipice of blind joy, numb jointed, afraid? Sentinel fear of the rustling leaf, the bared fang of shadow; the faceless formless ball-poised heritage of the tearing claw, the soothing petal. I fall, I fly, I move, am transported, wafted, impelled, whither? help, why? no, stop. The rope slackens, the padded limb ceases its relentless dumb tocsin,

imperceptibly the cane wheel is set in motion, all is well, fear on and do not be afraid.

– I suppose we'll have to go to Siobhans as usual, I'm afraid there's nowhere else. Assent in F minor, *con anima*, accidentals in 5 lb. sheet lead.

Proud bitch in the bus, how I hate the satin smooth of your clinical hair, the gentle curve of your soap softened neck, beribboned as a prize pig on market day, your indulgent profile beautiful in its painless incomprehension. You have never known unwelcome solitude or the soul scratching of the lonely, the parched ear of desire, the bumbling thunder of passion. For your dandied swain there is no hate, for he is one who suffers. See him suffer in his unchallenged possession, as useful to him as a flowered waistcoat in the frozen North, a chandelier in his coffin. Your gaze flicks over my face as a woollen whip, you queen of the upstairs of a double decker, no standing, spitting prohibited. Do you see past the glazed mirror of the night, or are your eyes fixed in the glassy reflection of your empty image, unworthy of the moving backdrop that passes behind? I, a lurching daub with brown paper parcel, despise you. I am drunk, and so are my friends. I call them my friends, because that is exactly what they are, friends. You can pick them up anywhere nowadays, they're cheap, inexpensive to run, and there is no down payment. Of course they don't last as long as they used to in the old days, but you can always throw them away and get new ones every year or so. These ones are the very latest model, sleek shiny and functionally designed. Everything is built in, heater, freezer, while the single cylinder mind needs almost no gear changing whatsoever, see them now at your local coffee bar. Drip dry friends, pre-digested, individual pie-faced friends and the friends you can see through when you hold him up to the light. I'm drunk all right. Are you drunk old woman shaped like a hoop, man with bulging neckline, boy with the big pimple. Wonder what he'd do if I went over and burst it. We are now passing Saint Stephen's Green where, as everybody knows, the Blessed Matt Talbot, God rest his masochistic soul, used to bathe naked clad only in old umbrella and sewing machine. Why shouldn't they make him a saint, I bet you wouldn't do it.

Saint Patrick the Father of all Snakes, pray for you and are you not afraid that a thunderbolt will come down from Heaven and strike you dead on the spot and you the man as had a good education and can read too. I'm really drunk but who cares,

supposing I stood up in the bus and took down my pants, just for laughs, Rousseau at the well, Overtone on the No. 69, anything to get them to do something. Or start groping the old woman under the seat, no that's a bit much, control, control, remember your sense of values, use your reasoning powers the way that you were taught in school, who made the world? God made the world. Supposing my dear boys you were to go into a bicycle shop and see all the parts lying around, an bhuil cead agam dul amac someone has been helping themselves to money from the cloakroom, hold out your hand, do you think you have a vocation, it hurts me far worse than you, our good name, Stephen still hasn't paid his school bill, the ringed dervishes chant;

You can't afford it
Stephen can't afford it,
Stephen is poor.

Darling who on earth are those funny people at the front door?

– Mumble sent me
– We're friends of grunt cough
– We've brought our own

We've brought our own, our bodies aren't shaped like this all the time. Portal swings in polite sufferance, we are in. Into sandwich talk on toast, bad jazz pierced by a cocktail sausage sticker, who cares? it's something we can dance to darling, isn't he marvellous like too sharp overblown embouchureless anyone who never did get past the third lesson, but whose peroxide frame was built for a popular tuxedo, revolving at 33. His bum never polished the flinty stool of practice, here have a piece of articulation that's as clean and crisp as last night's crap, what an exciting high note darling though it's only a B flat he strains for a G; who cares? it's a marvellous record and we can dance to it. It's the Palais urge of the *avant-garde* without the hair-oil and pass-out, the frozen terpsichore of the would beats grinding their beer-filled bellies together in graceless immobility.

– I hate progressive jazz, I mean it goes on and on. I was raised in the era of the three minute masterpiece and my slowly revolving mind with its Edison ear waits for the needle to run into the hole in the middle of the record. Oh I love ordinary jazz like Dixieland I could jive all night and can tell you that Buddy Bolden was cone shaped and collected blue earwigs. When he

stuck his head through the hole in the middle of Lake Pontchartrain people within a radius of nearly four feet were cured instantly. I used to collect engine numbers when I was young but now I'm collecting dead musicians, it's much better fun and you don't have to worry about getting wet. I have records by trumpeters with no heads, armless piano players and deaf and dumb blues singers. It's nice to feel that I can put a Legendary Great on the turntable whenever I wish, and sometimes I close my eyes and imagine that it's me playing to the whores in a Storyville brothel where jazz was born until M.G.M. put it on the stage of the Carnegie Hall and the starved looking film extras in false shirtfronts cheered like mad.

Mainly I think I like it because it makes me tap my left foot and the record-covers look fine hanging on the wall.

– Gee here you people are again, for a moment I thought I'd lost you, have some of my whiskey I know how things are. Jazz, now there's something I can tell you about, I've lived with jazz musicians all my life – remember one night Otis and I stopped by the Five Spot in the Village to hear Slide McCorn – you never heard of old Slide? – man Jay Jay wasn't in it. Slide was a regular guy, he wasn't one of the ones who went the whole way and actually lived with the spooks the way that some white musicians in New York do, no Slide was O.K. I remember he couldn't stand guys who were on the stuff – drugs you know – so one night at the Bohemia he goes up to Bird-ua-aagh-just get a load of that piece over there – any chance of laying it – who's the guy? oh steady huh-uaa-gh well anyway Monk says –

– I mean a girl of your age needs sex the same way as a thirsty horse needs – I mean –

– It just doesn't play any part in my life Henry, you'll just have to understand that if this thing is to go any farther that an actress on the way up – Henry what a marvellous dress –

> Let's look for something to eat, or better still for something to steal like a far out book, a Spanish paperweight; six eggs or a tartan shirt.

There's nothing worth stealing so let's sing instead; we'll sing together because we haven't really got the courage to sing Good Ship Venus, Ball of Inverness, Harlot of Jerusalem by ourselves. Later on we'll sing a student song about pints, that brings tears to our eyes and we're jolly good fellows all and remember the time we nearly won the junior rugby cup and secretly we wish we were

sticking our oafish ears into the middle of the scrum, and wasn't O'Mahony a marvellous hooker who went off to be a priest and doesn't it make you think, I mean he was a great chap and as broadminded as anyone and told nasty jokes about girls bodies and had tried to see the Harpie in the servants' wing undressing from the Study Hall window in the winter evenings, and now he's out in Africa as a missionary teaching new sins to the natives that they never heard of before, and telling the native women to cover their breasts because when he thinks about them in the evenings he wants to pull his wire.

We are the regular guys, in nonconformist uniform we know all the names, we are madly with it.

I work in an insurance office in the daytime but when I come home I change into my existentialist black and tell everyone I'm a poet; I get three paperbacks a week and I now have nearly two hundred on every subject from life in the womb to the meaning of space, I can construct sentences around the words motivation, eclecticism, stylized, dynamic and impress my fellow public-house dilettantes. In three or four years time when Mr. Crum retires I'll get married to a nice girl who is a virgin that I can respect and defile, and I'll have a car and a contemporary house with tile hanging and not too much glass. There'll be a brick fireplace and built-in wardrobes that grow and I'll start to buy hardbacked books to fill the built-in bookcases that grow, and some day if I'm very bored and it's too wet to do the garden I might get around to reading one of them. It's old-fashioned now to despise the telly and though a lot of it caters for the lower classes they do have some good programmes with top minds on the panel and sometimes actual war shots or a book-of-the-moment club. I'll go to shows, quarrel over money in bed and drink at Christmas. My children will go to a fairly good school and I'll make damn sure that My Girls don't get an opportunity to do the things that I want every girl to do. I'm here now because all the others are, and because parties are a part of growing up like pimples and motor-bikes; old slippers, venetian blinds, two light ales, not to worry. Quite.

– all right for a fiddle if you get her a bit jarred –
– got through fifteen pints in two hours flat –
– so Otis and I used to buy a chicken –
– you can bring her to my place there's plenty of room –
– how can you explain Lourdes? –
– get its neck into a drawer –

– let's drive to Killiney for a midnight swim we can wear our –
– range, sweep, texture, form, craftsmanship –
- it only hurts a little bit the first time –
– slam the drawer shut –
– only I and Goya –
– what a ball we had –
– you've only to look at Faulkner –
– the carburettor –
– Aquinas –
– those tits by the window –

Where am I going? Who do I care for? Why am I here? I wish I was dead. When does it end? What have I done?

'Nothing' drones the bum tenor sax, lisps the Modigliani on the wall, screams the university flag over the mantel, coughs the pile of sick on the floor, mouths the volume of Boehme on the display table.

'Nothing' whispers the girl in white.

Letter to an Ex-Wife

by Bruce Berlind

They said we were lucky that there were no children.
For years I believed it true, and even today
Would not want done what fate and technology
(The better part of luck) left wisely undone.
And yet, because of a great pain, I have risen
From wife and children sleeping peacefully
To rage in the night at a four-year part of me
That is not here and rankles at division.

The years have a way of smoothing out the edges
Not of the memory only but the mind
Which bristles for justification, driven mad
By the shyster ego's artful compulsive dodges.
And so I have risen to say: all that behind,
Tonight I could afford the child we never had.

Discovery

by Arnold Wesker

My trilogy is complete and I have learned, rather sadly, that communication between human beings through all the means we have at our disposal – and drama is only one of them – is far more difficult than I imagined. If I go back over the reviews and comments on my writings I realize the ambiguity of even an exclamation mark. The filters through which any communication must go – different values, different connotations, different experience, personality and environment – are so many and so complex that perhaps there is no such thing as 'basic' any longer. How, I wonder, can one be simple now?

I have discovered also the reasons why I wanted to write. This is an interesting discovery because it told me something about myself. As a boy leaving school I found myself in an extraordinary position. A Jew, oddly enough without money; who came from the East End but had, God knows how, a cultured speaking voice; who spoke intelligently but had no academic qualifications; who shouted about the excitement of music and literature but who was a carpenter's mate or a pastrycook; who preached socialism but really could not substantiate it with political theory because political theory was almost unintelligible to him.

I was contradiction personified and, as such, came into conflict with all sorts of people who couldn't quite make me out. Poor innocent that I was, I was never quite able to prove to my carpenter that political decisions affected him, and I never quite convinced my chef that art could be exciting. I can remember a boy in the R.A.F. who was a sort of Lenny from Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and with whom I came into conflict – he never understood what I was saying either, so I wrote a story for and about him to help resolve the conflict. I had a row with my pilot officer over the useless waste of conscription, neither did he understand – so I wrote a novel for him in an attempt to convince him. When I look back it seems to me that all my writings are attempts to resolve or continue more lucidly arguments I had with my family, my friends and the people with whom I worked.

I have realized too that of all the new names in the re-vitalized theatrical scene not one of us is a giant, no literary figure towers over us all; and this, I have realized, doesn't matter. I see us rather as John the Baptists: we are announcing the great men to come. Perhaps our task is more difficult than that of our followers will be. The experience we had artistically to organize into drama was the experience of a trivial society run by trivial politicians and

commercial kings who imagined that humanity itself was trivial and deserved little more than plenty to eat and a washing machine. Well, food and the easing of drudgery are fine but it is only the beginning; human beings deserve more. This, perhaps, is the importance of what the new dramatists are saying. We deserve more! The refrigerator is a godsend but is this the sum total of human endeavour? To ask this question is to make us pathfinders but no discoverers.

Artistically we have arrived with nothing new and this doesn't matter either – nine tenths of the population never got around to discovering the old forms; can we wonder that they might laugh at Beckett and Henry Moore? What we have done is brought a new dimension to the old scene. Instead of Noël Coward writing about this happy breed the happy breed have written about themselves and discovered themselves not all that happy. No one blames Mr. Coward, he did what his decade left him to do and we have done what was left to do by ours. If the age is not great, then great men do not appear.

Or perhaps any greatness we have is frustrated by the complexity and contradictions of our times, I'm not sure. It is always worth staying alive, only as time goes on, it becomes increasingly difficult to explain why. This is one of the things art does, I think; in passing on the experience of living it gives us reasons why we should live at all. Only, God help us, with the deepest will-to-live in the world, it is still difficult to explain why. And one of the reasons is because we are cluttered up with trivia: our loyalties are demanded for such useless traditions, our love is asked for such unrewarding objects, our efforts are called for the fulfilment of such futile ends. Our energy is exploited. This is the kind of jungle the new writers have had to clear away and we too have used up so much energy on this task that perhaps we will have none left with which to see the vision.

I have discovered too that realistic art is a contradiction in terms. Art is the re-creation of experience, not the copying of it. Some writers use naturalistic means to re-create experience, others non-naturalistic. I happen to use naturalistic means; but all the statements I make are made theatrically. Reality is as misleading as truth; realistic art makes nonsense. If I develop, it might be away from naturalism – I have discovered that this can be too constricting – but I will still be trying to re-create the reality of my experience. I would no more be non-naturalistic for its own sake

than I was naturalistic for its own sake; I am concerned with both only in order to communicate what experience has meant to me. And so the *Trilogy* was written for all the people I ever knew – but at a price; the price was the final discovery that some of the innocence of it all had gone, because art is not innocent.

The Disenchanted

by Babette Deutsch

The pointed savor of a pineapple,
A world of corners, each hiding surprise,
And melancholy, as in a giraffe's eyes:
The kingdom of childhood is dappled glory. Old,
We were like prisoners at their exercise.

Here nothing shines. Night passes. The bare street
Under that stone sky is Chirico's.
Shadows are cut by a grey light that glows
Like the cheek of a ghost. Mystery, once alive
With promises, now clings to what death knows.

Morning returns. Though snow is on the river,
The famous punctual daffodils return.
Young lovers lie together. They will learn
The truth that holds us still. Loss is our jokesmith,
And tenderness the fire with which we burn.

Bernard Berenson

Poems by Leslie Fiedler

A DREAM OF LOST LADIES

That month, three nights the moon stayed full,
That March, which found me dry of rage.
Three nights I could not rise to love
Or fall to sleep; but in your face
All night I sought another moon,
Whose tables read not ebb but flow,
Not neap but spring. You only shone
With what light leaked through crazy shades,
Moon's moon, that never knew the sun,
That could not draw a tide to wet
The cracking sandflats of our bed.

Oh, wet with love, what distant star
Bestowed a dream on me, forbid
By three nights' moons to sleep or dream
I slept. I seemed, awake, to sit
Upon a stone, where no moon made
The seed descend or brought the scream
Like vomit or a gout of blood
To lips that might have kissed, then bit
The kiss. I touched the stone, which toad-
Cold to my buttocks, writhed and cried
That we were still alive. It lied.

I knew that voice, that skin, long wed
To madness, calling madness 'dear,'
'My dearest.' Once goat-warm, goat-sweet,
White throat, red fleece against my ear,
My eyes that closed against the red
They feared burned holes in darkness,
She died to me (but I first dead) –
Then turned to haunt above his beer
Her dear, whom we in bed made mad.
For one long year he could not move
The arm that held her hard to love.

She crouched, a stone against my flesh
That had been stone to flesh. A tree
Above us both made wooden figs
At God with wooden thumbs, while He
Asserted absence in a cloud.
And I could feel, like fumbled braille,
The name in bark of one too proud
To love a failure, brew his tea,
Who now is tail for schoolboys. Blood
Came where I touched the trunk;
And tasting it, I all at once was drunk

On juice of subjugation, shared
The willed paralysis of will
That brings an empty woman down
With weight enough to gouge out hell,
Though men have proved earth solid stone.
And lying prone, I watched God's cloud
Dissolving face by face to one
Who dreams me dreaming her until
She scarcely knows herself alone;
But folds against her breast, beguiled,
My name, as if a living child.

That month, three nights the moon stayed full;
I woke the third, and in my rage
Forgot I had not slept. Love rose
As if from sleep to find your face
More flushed but terrible as the moon.
The tables still said ebb, I flowed;
Said neap, I sprang. You heard me moan:
'I freely acknowledge your power and grace.'
Moon's moon, you need no sun
To light the tide you draw to wet
The heaving sandflats of our bed.

TO MARGARET

When I was young my lust was in my fists.
I should have tacked an ersatz foreskin on
And, naked, fought at Ephesus with beasts;
Instead I smote a wall, struck you. For you
Seemed me and I the only beast in view.

Love must somehow justify
What hate must learn to shun;
The hand that hurts, the handy hurt
Damn two but ransom one.

Now I am old my lust is in my eye:
To stroke with every glance impalpably
The flesh from which, you know, I long to die,
Death-drag at forty looks like lechery,
And drags you down whom I can't tell from me.

Love can somehow justify
What hate can never shun;
Betrayal and the wince of shame
Damn two but ransom one.

L'INNOMINATO

I

Go, nameless song, to her I shall not name
To say that I remember how the snow was black
And clung in summer to astonished trees,
Like grace or roots grown shame-
less in the place of fruit, while on their knees
The unbelieving cried they saw the back-
ward parts of God and lived. They lied;
For only she and I swung by our hair
Like drunken stars from where mere nothing drank
Our prayers; and orbiting thus, shank to shank,
We burned into each other's atmosphere
And, touching, knew that both our worlds had died.

II

When I, who fed on pride and gnawed on fear
And knelt in time of famine to eat grass;
And drank apart in silence my own tear
And would not pray that any cup might pass,
Prayed God you would not love me, all my luck
And virtue turned from stubborn stone
To lucid manna, while the mountains spoke
A mid-day grace and eating was a poem.

III

God knows why the gods put on
With garb of love the masks of death.
The silly swan they strip of down
Sings lies with her last breath.

She sings that we shall slough our skins
And, rinsed by star and moon,
Fall gently as the lapse of pain
Into a silver swoon.

She sings that we shall dream the gods
Unmasked of love and death,
As simple as the sheerest sword
Or your atrocious faith.

PROTHALAMION FOR ONE WHO WOULD NOT WED

Marry, marry! let fools falter;
Only wed the flesh is fair.
Put cut flowers on the altar;
Let us blossom, who must bear.

Faith is frail and flesh no stauncher;
Both will end and lovers part.
Yet let wine be turned to water,
Let a word constrain the heart.

Marry, marry! though forever
Lapse before the organ cease.
Let each be the other's weather,
Though each mar the other's peace.

Peace is poor but grace abounding;
Marriage is a prayer for grace:
Back to back in dark compounding
What we fail at face to face.

TO RUTH

Love is cruciform,
Desire square;
One lures us to the terror where
We hang as guileless as a tear
And wash our loins
With wise despair.

One hones our edges
Lovely sheer,
And grants us angles
Where our dear
May bleed him white
And bleeding hear
The wise birds tangled
In our hair.

Drawing by Eric Hebborn

May Day Eve

by Nick Joaquin

The old people had ordered that the dancing should stop at ten o'clock, but it was almost midnight before the carriages came filing up to the front door, the servants running to and fro with torches to light the departing guests, while the girls who were staying were promptly herded upstairs to the bedrooms, the young men gathering around to wish them a good night and lamenting their ascent with mock sighs and moanings, proclaiming themselves disconsolate but straightway going off to finish the punch and the brandy though they were quite drunk already and simply bursting with wild spirits, merriment, arrogance and audacity, for they were young bucks newly arrived from Europe, the ball had been in their honour, and they had waltzed and polka-ed and bragged and swaggered and flirted all night and were in no mood to sleep yet – no, caramba, not on this moist tropic eve! Not on this mystic May eve! – with the night still young and so seductive that it was madness not to go out, not to go forth – and serenade the neighbours! cried one; and swim in the Pasig! cried another, and gather fireflies! cried a third – whereupon there arose a great clamour for coats and capes, for hats and canes, and they were presently stumbling out among the medieval shadows of the foul street where a couple of street lamps flickered and a last carriage rattled away upon the cobbles while the blind black houses muttered hush-hush, their tiled roofs looming like sinister chessboards against a wild sky murky with clouds, save where an evil young moon prowled about in a corner or where a murderous wind whirled, whistling and whining, smelling now of the sea and now of the summer orchards and wafting unbearable childhood fragrances of ripe guavas to the young men trooping so uproariously down the street that the girls who were disrobing upstairs in the bedrooms scattered screaming to the windows, crowded giggling at the windows, but were soon sighing amorously over those young men bawling below, over those wicked young men and their handsome apparel, their proud flashing eyes, and their elegant moustaches so black and vivid in the moonlight that the girls were quite ravished with love, and began crying to one another how carefree were men but how awful to be a girl and what a horrid, horrid world it was, till old Anastasia plucked them off by the ear or the pigtail and chased them off to bed – while from up the street came the clackety-clack of the watchman's boots on the

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cobbles, and the clang-clang of his lantern against his knee, and the mighty roll of his great voice booming through the night: '*Guardia sereno-o-o! A las doce han dado-o-o!*'

And it was May again, said the old Anastasia. It was the first day of May and witches were abroad in the night, she said – for it was a night of divination, a night of lovers, and those who cared might peer in a mirror and would there behold the face of whoever it was they were fated to marry, said the old Anastasia as she hobbled about picking up the piled crinolines and folding up shawls and raking slippers to a corner while the girls, climbing into the four great poster-beds that overwhelmed the room, began shrieking with terror, scrambling over each other and imploring the old woman not to frighten them.

'Enough, enough, Anastasia! We want to sleep!'

'Go scare the boys instead, you old witch!'

'She is not a witch, she is a maga. She was born on Christmas Eve!'

'St. Anastasia, virgin and martyr.'

'Huh? Impossible! She has conquered seven husbands! Are you a virgin, Anastasia?'

'No, but I am seven times a martyr because of you girls.'

'Let her prophesy, let her prophesy! Whom will I marry, old gypsy? Come, tell me.'

'You may learn in a mirror if you are not afraid.'

'I am not afraid, I will go!' cried the young cousin Agueda, jumping up in bed.

'Girls, girls – we are making too much noise! My mother will hear and will come and pinch us all. Agueda, lie down! And you, Anastasia, I command you to shut your mouth and go away.'

'Your mother told me to stay here all night, my grand lady!'

'And I will not lie down!' cried the rebellious Agueda, leaping to the floor. 'Stay, old woman. Tell me what I have to do.'

'Tell her! Tell her!' chimed the other girls.

The old woman dropped the clothes she had gathered and approached and fixed her eyes on the girl. 'You must take a candle,' she instructed, 'and go into a room that is dark and that has a mirror in it and you must be alone in the room. Go up to the mirror and close your eyes and say:

"*Mirror, mirror,*
show to me
him whose woman
I will be."

'If all goes right, just above your left shoulder will appear the face of the man you will marry.'

A silence. Then: 'And what if all does not go right?' asked Agueda.

'Ah, then the Lord have mercy on you!'

'Why?'

'Because you may see – the devil!'

The girls screamed and clutched one another, shivering.

'But what nonsense!' cried Agueda. 'This is the year 1847. There are no devils any more!' Nevertheless she had turned pale. 'But where could I go, huh? Yes, I know! Down to the sala. It has that big mirror and no one is there now.'

'No, Agueda, no! It is a mortal sin! You will see the devil!'

'I do not care! I am not afraid! I will go!'

'Oh, you wicked girl! Oh, you mad girl!'

'If you do not come to bed, Agueda, I will call my mother.'

'And if you do I will tell her who came to visit you at the convent last March. Come, old woman – give me that candle. I go.'

'Oh, girls – come and stop her! Take hold of her! Block the door!'

But Agueda had already slipped outside; was already tiptoeing across the hall; her feet bare and her dark hair falling down her shoulders and streaming in the wind as she fled down the stairs, the lighted candle sputtering in one hand while with the other she pulled up her white gown from her ankles.

She paused breathless in the doorway to the sala and her heart failed her. She tried to imagine the room filled again with lights, laughter, whirling couples, and the jolly jerky music of the fiddlers. But, oh, it was a dark den, a weird cavern, for the windows had been closed and the furniture stacked up against the walls. She crossed herself and stepped inside.

The mirror hung on the wall before her; a big antique mirror with a gold frame carved into leaves and flowers and mysterious curlicues. She saw herself approaching fearfully in it: a small white ghost that the darkness bodied forth – but not willingly, not completely, for her eyes and hair were so dark that the face approaching in the mirror seemed only a mask that floated forward; a bright mask with two holes gaping in it, blown forward by the white cloud of her gown. But when she stood before the mirror she lifted the candle level with her chin and the dead mask bloomed into her living face.

She closed her eyes and whispered the incantation. When she had finished such a terror took hold of her that she felt unable to move, unable to open her eyes, and thought she would stand there forever, enchanted. But she heard a step behind her, and a smothered giggle, and instantly opened her eyes.

'And what did you see, Mama? Oh, what was it?'

But Doña Agueda had forgotten the little girl on her lap: she was staring past the curly head nestling at her breast and seeing herself in the big mirror hanging in the room. It was the same room and the same mirror but the face she now saw in it was an old face – a hard, bitter, vengeful face, framed in greying hair, and so sadly altered, so sadly different from that other face like a white mask, that fresh young face like a pure mask that she had brought before this mirror one wild May Day midnight years and years ago . . .

'But what was it, Mama? Oh, please go on! What did you see?'

Doña Agueda looked down at her daughter but her face did not soften though her eyes filled with tears. 'I saw the devil!' she said bitterly.

The child blanched. 'The devil, Mama? Oh . . . OH!'

'Yes, my love. I opened my eyes and there in the mirror, smiling at me over my left shoulder, was the face of the devil.'

'Oh, my poor little Mama! And were you very frightened?'

'You can imagine. And that is why good little girls do not look into mirrors except when their mothers tell them. You must stop this naughty habit, darling, of admiring yourself in every mirror you pass – or you may see something frightful some day.'

'But the devil, Mama – what did he look like?'

'Well, let me see . . . He had curly hair and a scar on his cheek — '

'Like the scar of Papa?'

'Well, yes. But this of the devil was a scar of sin, while that of your Papa is a scar of honour. Or so he says.'

'Go on about the devil.'

'Well, he had moustaches.'

'Like those of Papa?'

'Oh, no. Those of your Papa are dirty and greying and smell horribly of tobacco, while these of the devil were very black and elegant – oh, how elegant!'

'And did he have horns and a tail?'

The mother's lips curled. 'Yes, he did! But, alas, I could not see them at that time. All I could see were his fine clothes, his flashing eyes, his curly hair and moustaches.'

'And did he speak to you, Mama?'

'Yes . . . Yes, he spoke to me,' said Doña Agueda. And bowing her greying head, she wept.

'Charms like yours have no need for a candle, fair one,' he had said, smiling at her in the mirror and stepping back to give her a low mocking bow. She had whirled around and glared at him and he had burst into laughter.

'But I remember you!' he cried. 'You are Agueda, whom I left a mere infant and came home to find a tremendous beauty, and I danced a waltz with you but you would not give me the polka.'

'Let me pass,' she muttered fiercely, for he was barring her way.

'But I want to dance the polka with you, fair one,' he said.

So they stood before the mirror; their panting breath the only sound in the dark room; the candle shining between them and flinging their shadows to the wall. And young Badoy Montiya (who had crept home very drunk to pass out quietly in bed) suddenly found himself cold sober and very much awake and ready for anything. His eyes sparkled and the scar in his face gleamed scarlet.

'Let me pass!' she cried again, in a voice of fury, but he grasped her by the wrist.

'No,' he smiled. 'Not until we have danced.'

'Go to the devil!'

'What a temper has my *serrana*!'

'I am not your *serrana*!'

'Whose, then? Someone I know? Someone I have offended grievously? Because you treat me, you treat all my friends like your mortal enemies.'

'And why not?' she demanded, jerking her wrist away and flashing her teeth in his face. 'Oh, how I detest you, you pompous young men! You go to Europe and you come back elegant lords and we poor girls are too tame to please you. We have no grace like the Parisiennes, we have no fire like the Sevillians, and we have no salt, no salt, no salt! Aie, how you weary me, how you bore me, you fastidious young men!'

'Come, come – how do you know about us?'

'I have heard you talking, I have heard you talking among yourselves, and I despise the pack of you!'

'But clearly you do not despise yourself, señorita. You come to admire your charms in the mirror even in the middle of the night!'

She turned livid and he had a moment of malicious satisfaction.

'I was not admiring myself, sir!'

'You were admiring the moon perhaps?'

'Oh!' she gasped, and burst into tears. The candle dropped from her hand and she covered her face and sobbed piteously. The candle had gone out and they stood in darkness, and young Badoy was conscience-stricken.

'Oh, do not cry, little one! Oh, please forgive me! Please do not cry! But what a brute I am! I was drunk, little one, I was drunk and knew not what I said.'

He groped and found her hand and touched it to his lips. She shuddered in her white gown.

'Let me go,' she moaned, and tugged feebly.

'No. Say you forgive me first. Say you forgive me, Agueda.'

But instead she pulled his hand to her mouth and bit it – bit so sharply into the knuckles that he cried with pain and lashed out with his other hand – lashed out and hit the air, for she was gone, she had fled, and he heard the rustling of her skirts up the stairs as he furiously sucked his bleeding fingers.

Cruel thoughts raced through his head: he would go and tell his mother and make her turn the savage girl out of the house – or he would go himself to the girl's room and drag her out of bed and slap, slap, slap her silly face! But at the same time he was thinking that they were all going up to Antipolo in the morning and was already planning how he would manœuvre himself into the same boat with her.

Oh, he would have his revenge, he would make her pay, that little harlot! She should suffer for this, he thought greedily, licking his bleeding knuckles. But – Judas! – what eyes she had! And what a pretty colour she turned when angry! He remembered her bare shoulders: gold in the candlelight and delicately furred. He saw the mobile insolence of her neck, and her taut breasts steady in the fluid gown. Son of a Turk, but she was quite enchanting! How could she think she had no fire or grace? and no salt? An arroba she had of it!

'. . . *No lack of salt in the chrism*
At the moment of thy baptism!'

he sang aloud in the dark room and suddenly realized that he had fallen madly in love with her. He ached intensely to see her again – at once! – to touch her hand and her hair; to hear her harsh voice. He ran to the window and flung open the casements and the beauty of the night struck him back like a blow. It was May, it was summer, and he was young – young! – and deliriously in love. Such a happiness welled up within him the tears spurted from his eyes.

But he did not forgive her – no! He would still make her pay. He would still have his revenge, he thought viciously, and kissed his wounded fingers. But what a night it had been! 'I will never forget this night,' he thought aloud in an awed voice, standing in the dark room, the tears in his eyes and the wind in his hair and his bleeding knuckles pressed to his mouth.

But, alas, the heart forgets; the heart is distracted; and May-time passes; summer ends; the storms break over the rot-ripe orchards and the heart grows old; while the hours, the days, the months, and the years pile up and pile up, till the mind becomes too crowded, too confused: dust gathers in it; cobwebs multiply; the walls darken and fall into ruin and decay; the memory perishes . . . and there came a time when Don Badoy Montiya walked home through a May Day midnight without remembering, without even caring to remember; being merely concerned in feeling his way across the street with his cane; his eyes having grown quite dim and his legs uncertain – for he was old; he was over sixty; he was a very stooped and shrivelled old man with white hair and moustaches, coming home from a secret meeting of conspirators; his mind still resounding with the speeches and his patriot heart still exultant as he picked his way up the steps to the front door and inside the slumbering darkness of the house; wholly unconscious of the May night, till on his way down the hall, chancing to glance into the sala, he shuddered, he stopped, his blood ran cold – for he had seen a face in the mirror there – a ghostly candlelit face with the eyes closed and the lips moving, a face that he suddenly felt he had seen there before though it was a full minute before the lost memory came flowing, came tiding back, so overflooding the actual moment and so swiftly washing away the piled hours and days and months and years that he was left suddenly young again: he was a gay young buck again, lately come from Europe: he had been dancing all night: he was very drunk: he stopped in

the doorway: he saw a face in the dark: he cried out . . . and the lad standing before the mirror (for it was a lad in a nightgown) jumped with fright and almost dropped his candle, but looking around and seeing the old man, laughed out with relief and came running.

'Oh, Grandpa, how you frightened me!'

Don Badoy had turned very pale. 'So it was you, you young bandit! And what is all this, hey? What are you doing down here at this hour?'

'Nothing, Grandpa. I was only . . . I am only . . . '

'Yes, you are the great Señor Only and how delighted I am to make your acquaintance, Señor Only! But if I break this cane on your head you may wish you were someone else, sir!'

'It was just foolishness, Grandpa. They told me I would see my wife.'

'Wife? What wife?'

'Mine. The boys at school said I would see her if I looked in a mirror tonight and said:

"*Mirror, mirror,*
show to me
her whose lover
I will be."

Don Badoy cackled ruefully. He took the boy by the hair, pulled him along into the room, sat down on a chair, and drew the boy between his knees. 'Now, put your candle down on the floor, son, and let us talk this over. So you want your wife already, hey? You want to see her in advance, hey? But do you know that these are wicked games and that wicked boys who play them are in danger of seeing horrors.'

'Well, the boys did warn me I might see a witch instead.'

'Exactly! A witch so horrible you may die of fright. And she will bewitch you, she will torture you, she will eat your heart and drink your blood!'

'O, come now, Grandpa. This is 1890. There are no witches any more.'

'Oh-ho, my young Voltaire! And what if I tell you that I myself have seen a witch?'

'You? Where?'

'Right in this room and right in that mirror,' said the old man, and his playful voice had turned savage.

'When, Grandpa?'

'Not so long ago. When I was a bit older than you. Oh, I was a vain fellow and though I was feeling very sick that night and merely wanted to lie down somewhere and die I could not pass that doorway of course without stopping to see in the mirror what I looked like when dying. But when I poked my head in what should I see in the mirror but . . . but . . . '

'The witch?'

'Exactly!'

'And did she bewitch you, Grandpa?'

'She bewitched me and she tortured me. She ate my heart and drank my blood,' said the old man bitterly.

'Oh, my poor little Grandpa! Why have you never told me! And was she very horrible?'

'Horrible? God, no – she was beautiful! She was the most beautiful creature I have ever seen! Her eyes were somewhat like yours but her hair was like black waters and her golden shoulders were bare. My God, she was enchanting! But I should have known – I should have known even then – the dark and fatal creature she was!'

A silence. Then: 'What a horrid mirror this is, Grandpa,' whispered the boy.

'What makes you say that, boy?'

'Well, you saw this witch in it. And Mama once told me that Grandma once told her that Grandma once saw the devil in this mirror. Was it of the scare that Grandma died?'

Don Badoy started. For a moment he had forgotten that she was dead, that she had perished – the poor Agueda; that they were at peace at last, the two of them, and her tired body at rest; her broken body set free at last from the brutal pranks of the earth – from the trap of a May night; from the snare of summer; from the terrible silver nets of the moon. She had been a mere heap of white hair and bones in the end: a whimpering withered consumptive, lashing out with her cruel tongue; her eyes like live coals; her face like ashes . . . Now, nothing – nothing save a name on a stone; save a stone in a graveyard – nothing! nothing at all! was left of the young girl who had flamed so vividly in a mirror one wild May Day midnight, long, long ago.

And remembering how she had sobbed so piteously; remembering how she had bitten his hand and fled and how he had sung aloud in the dark room and surprised his heart in the instant of

falling in love; such a grief tore up his throat and eyes that he felt ashamed before the boy; pushed the boy away; stood up and fumbled his way to the window; threw open the casements and looked out – looked out upon the medieval shadows of the foul street where a couple of street lamps flickered and a last carriage was rattling away upon the cobbles, while the blind black houses muttered hush-hush, their tiled roofs looming like sinister chess-boards against a wild sky murky with clouds, save where an evil old moon prowled about in a corner or where a murderous wind whirled, whistling and whining, smelling now of the sea and now of the summer orchards and wafting unbearable Maytime memories of an old, old love to the old man shaking with sobs by the window; the bowed old man sobbing so bitterly at the window; the tears streaming down his cheeks and the wind in his hair and one hand pressed to his mouth – while from up the street came the clackety-clack of the watchman's boots on the cobbles, and the clang clang of his lantern against his knee, and the mighty roll of his great voice booming through the night: '*Guardia seren-o-o! A las doce han dado-o-o!*'

Odor

by Saadat Hasan Manto

It was again the monsoon season.

Drops of rain had begun their patter on the leaves of the pepal tree near the window. Inside lay the teak bed on which a Ghatan girl had slept with Randhir.

Beyond the window, in the night's milky darkness, the pepal leaves bathed in the rain, quivering like earrings.

On the spring mattress of the bed, the Ghatan girl had clung to Randhir like goose-flesh. Some hours earlier, he had seen her under the tamarind tree, sheltering from the downpour. She probably worked in the rope factory nearby. Randhir had watched her from his balcony where he had come for a change from the mustiness of his room. He had wanted a diversion, for all afternoon he had done nothing but read the same newspaper again and

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again. He had cleared his throat and coughed. This had attracted her attention and he had beckoned her to come up.

For several days he had been feeling very lonely and dejected. One reason was the war which had put beyond his reach those Anglo-Indian girls who used to come out with him for the evening and even for the night. They were not expensive and because of his English education he had preferred to date them rather than go to the brothels. With the coming of the war, some of them had enlisted in the Women's Auxiliary Corps, others had joined the newly opened dancing-schools in the Fort area. As only tommies were admitted to these schools, Randhir had felt frustrated. His favourite girls had gone off the market. The only ones available were in the dancing-schools where white skin was the passport for admission; nothing else mattered. This had made Randhir very bitter for he had felt that he was better educated, more refined and healthier than the average tommy.

Before the war, Randhir had had many a rendezvous with his girl friends of the Nagpada and Taj Mahal Hotel areas. He knew more about these girls, physically, than did the Christian boys with whom they flirted, until they married the most gullible of them.

Randhir had called the Ghatan girl over to his flat because he had been hurt by the airs Hazel had put on since her enlistment. Every morning he would see her leave her flat, directly below his own, in her uniform, her khaki cap set at a rakish angle, walking as if all passers-by were only waiting to spread themselves out, like sacking on the pavement, for her to walk on.

Randhir had often wondered why he was so attracted by girls like Hazel. Was it because they made themselves physically attractive by accentuating their curves and contours or was it for their lack of inhibitions? They never felt abashed at referring to their menstrual irregularities, they told stories about their former lovers, their feet automatically tapped the floor on hearing a dance tune and in bed they were like patent medicines with directions for use.

When Randhir had beckoned the Ghatan girl, he did not have any intention of taking her to bed. Noticing her drenched clothes he had thought that the poor girl might get pneumonia and had said, 'Take off those wet clothes, you may catch a cold'.

She had understood him, though she did not know his language. Red webs of shame had suddenly floated in her eyes. When Randhir had handed her a fresh white *dhoti*, she had hesitated for

a moment and then abruptly she had loosened her dirty coarse *kashta*, made filthier by the rain. As the soaked garment collapsed round her legs she had swiftly covered her thighs with the *dhoti*. She had then tried to take off her tight *choli* by opening a tiny knot, almost embedded in the deep and narrow hollow between her breasts.

Her worn-out nails had pecked at the tiny wet knot several times but had failed to loosen it. In despair, she had said something to Randhir in Marathi, which meant, 'What am I to do, it won't open . . . ?'

Randhir had sat down beside her and investigated the knot. But soon, he had lost his patience and gripping the strings on either side of the knot he had given a sudden jerk. At once the string had snapped and his hands had brushed over her breasts, which had come trembling into view. For a moment Randhir had felt like a potter, using freshly kneaded clay, who had suddenly moulded two cups on the Ghatan girl's chest. Her breasts had the pliancy, the moist roughness and the cooling warmth of vessels that have just come off the potter's wheel. Spotless and mud coloured, they had shone dully with a strange glow which seemed to come from a luminous layer beneath her translucent skin. Her uplifted breasts had looked like lamps lit at the bottom of a muddy pool.

It was again the season of rains.

Beyond the window the pepal leaves had dripped with rain. The Ghatan girl's soaked two-piece dress was on the floor in a filthy heap. The girl had clung to Randhir. The warmth of her nude unwashed body had reminded him of a hot bath in winter in a filthy public *hamam*.

All night she had clung to Randhir, as if they were one. They had hardly exchanged a word or two, for their panting was as eloquent as their lips and hands were expressive. All night, Randhir's hands had fondled her breasts, like the caress of the breeze. Occasionally, her dark aureola, with their coarse grain and tiny nipples, had stiffened and started a tremor that would streak through her body and communicate itself even to Randhir.

Randhir had experienced such tremors hundreds of times and was familiar with the delicious sensation they imparted. He had spent many nights with girls, clasping their taut or soft breasts against his own. He had slept with all sorts of girls, simple and talkative ones who gave him information about their families that

no stranger should know, and the type who bore all the physical burden in bed and would not let him exert himself. But this Ghatan girl who had come up to his flat, from her shelter under the tamarind tree, had been quite different.

All night Randhir had inhaled a strange odor from her body, an odor both unpleasant and pleasant. He had sought for it in her armpits, her hair, breasts, navel and in every other part of her body, where it could pervade his nose. He had thought that he would never have felt the nearness of the girl but for this odor which had penetrated every layer of his mind and had seeped through his memories, new and old.

For one night, Randhir and the girl had been fused together by this odor: they had merged into one another and slipped down to fathomless depths where they had been transformed into pure ecstasy, a state which they thought would be perpetual in spite of its evanescence, and still and stable even though there were fluctuations. They had been like a little bird that soars into the blueness of the sky, higher and higher, until it becomes a motionless dot.

Randhir was familiar with the odor which had exhaled from every pore of the Ghatan girl's body, but he had not been able to analyse it. It was like the fresh smell of earth sprinkled with water . . . but no, this odor was different. It was not an artificial smell like that of lavender or attar, but something natural and eternal, like the relationship that has existed between man and woman since the beginning of time.

Randhir hated perspiration. After a bath he usually powdered his armpits or used deodorants. It was surprising that he had kissed the hairy armpits of the Ghatan girl many times . . . yes, many times, and had felt no aversion. In fact, it had given him a peculiar feeling of pleasure. The tiny hair in the armpits, bedewed with perspiration, had given off the same odor which had been obvious and yet so incomprehensible. Randhir had felt that he knew this odor, that he recognized it, understood it, but he could not describe it to anyone else.

* * *

The monsoons were back again.

Randhir looked out of the window and saw the swaying pepal leaves bathing in the rain; the sound of their rustle and patter merging in the atmosphere. The night was dark, not pitch dark,

but of the darkness that seemed to have absorbed some subdued pearly light, washed down from the stars by the raindrops. The season was the same, when there was only one teak bed in the room, but now another lay beside it. In the corner stood a new dressing-table.

It was again the season of rains, the season of marriages.

The raindrops were flushing the stars of their milky light, but the atmosphere was filled with the strong perfume of henna. One of the beds was empty. On the other lay Randhir looking beyond the window at the dance of the raindrops on the swaying pepal leaves. By his side was a milky white girl who had fallen asleep trying unsuccessfully to cover her nakedness. Her red silk *shalwar* lay on the other bed, one end of its dark-red cord dangling by its side. Also flung on this bed were the other clothes of which she had been stripped, her green shirt with red flowers to match the *shalwar*, her brassiere, underwear and *dupatta*. All were red, marriage red, and scented with henna.

Gold powder lay in the girl's black hair, like dust. The blurred make-up on her face . . . a mixture of gold dust, powder and rouge . . . was like a pallid mask of death. Her creamy breasts were blotched with the color of her red brassiere.

Her breasts were as white as milk, a whiteness that has a faint tinge of blue. Randhir glanced at the girl several times and thought, 'It seems as if I have just pulled out the nails from a crate and lifted her out,' for she had scratches on her body like packing marks on books and crockery. When Randhir had unknotted the cord of her tight fitting brassiere, he had felt the ribbing on the soft flesh of her back and bosom, and the creased imprint left round her waist by the cord of her *shalwar*. A heavy and sharp-edged gold necklace, set with jewels, had bruised her breast as if it had been scratched wildly with nails.

It was the same season of the monsoons.

Countless raindrops were falling again on the soft delicate pepal leaves. Randhir heard the familiar patter throughout the night. It was a pleasant season. A cool breeze was blowing, but it carried with it the scent of henna. For a long time Randhir's hands stroked the girl's bosom, white as fresh milk. They brushed her breasts gently, like the caress of the breeze. His fingers roving over her soft milky body felt racing tremors and stirred suppressed passions. When he pressed his breast to the girl's bosom every pore of his body heard the twanging of the girl's strummed

emotions . . . but where was that note, that call of the Ghatan girl's odor, which had been more compelling than the cry of a suckling baby, that cry which had gone beyond the limits of sound and for him, somehow, had become a nameless perfume.

Randhir was looking out through the bars of the window. Close by the pepal leaves were rustling, but he was trying to look beyond, far beyond them, at the luminous grey clouds. They had a strange glow like the one that had lurked in the Ghatan girl's breasts, a glow that was hidden like a secret object but yet was discernible.

By his side lay a girl whose body was as white as flour kneaded with milk and *ghee*. Her sleeping body gave off the perfume of henna, which had now grown faint. Randhir felt a sudden aversion for this dying perfume. It had a peculiar tang, like the taste of the mouth after belching . . . unsavory and insipid. Randhir looked at the girl by his side. He found her skin covering her body like whitish curdled grains of sour milk floating without life in a colourless liquid. His senses were permeated with the odor which had exhaled effortlessly from the body of the Ghatan girl. It was an odor lighter but more penetrating than the attar of henna, reaching the olfactory organs without even the intake of the breath.

Randhir rallied and again stroked the milky body of the girl. His hand countered numbness; there was no responsive tremor. His new bride, the daughter of a magistrate, a graduate, the heartthrob of the boys of her college, had failed to kindle his masculine interest. In the dying perfume of henna attar, he continued to grope for the odor of the Ghatan girl, the odor he had inhaled from her unwashed body in these very days of the monsoons, when the pepal leaves had bathed in the rain.

Translated from Urdu by Hamid Jalal

The Return of the Pioneer

by Amos Mossenson

Well, there I was sitting in the barred cell in a mood as messy as the clothes I was wearing. The sight of the iron bars gave me the feeling of the torture chambers of the Spanish Inquisition. From the deeps of memory those bars dredged up the horrible forceps that dentists use, which in turn reminded me of what I

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could not help feeling already. Namely, that I was as hungry as a tiger.

But finally the door opened and in wandered a police officer, still three-quarters asleep, with the legs of his pajama pants sticking out from under his coat.

'What's your name?' he asked in a tone of annoyance.

'I-whistled,' I answered in helpless indifference.

'What's your name?' he repeated, as though he hadn't heard.

'I-whistled.'

'What's your name? What do people call you?' And he amplified his question with gestures.

'People call me I-whistled,' I yelled into his ear. 'When I was a kid I couldn't whistle, and one day I ran to the gang hollering: "Hey, fellows, I whistled"; so ever since then everybody calls me I-whistled.'

'Where do you live?' and he took out his notebook.

'In the Negev.'

'What street?' he went on.

'Listen, Comrade,' I made a last desperate effort, 'I am a member of a kibbutz in the desert, in the Negev. I have a week's leave and it's over tomorrow. If you try to hold me up here you'll have our Chairlady to deal with, and what she might do – I'm not responsible for the consequences.'

'Sit still!' said the officer through his teeth, and to feel safer he opened the door leading to the police room. Then he went on:

'What's your business down there in the Negev?'

'I put a brake on the wind.'

A burst of laughter nearly knocked me over. All the policemen in the station were now thronging around the door of the cell, listening in.

'I told you he's off his nut,' said the redhead.

'Puts a brake on the wind! Ha! Ha! Ha!'

'If we hadn't caught him he'd have tarred up all Jerusalem.'

The officer went on questioning me, and I began to sweat. But all of a sudden he was called away. A gang of thieves had been caught. They had broken into an apartment, put the owners to sleep with some sleeping powder or something, and then, by accident, they had fallen asleep themselves.

So there I was, left alone with my lugubrious thoughts. The long anticipated leave had finally come. More than six months had passed since I'd had my last one. That time we had marched

through the streets of the town, proud and unkempt, sporting beards and unruly mops of hair, proudly displaying our camel-insignia on shoulders and chest. Mothers pointed us out, telling their little ones: 'They're from the Negev.' The girls showered compliments on us for our bushy beards, thinking not of the beards but of what was behind them. And the kids ran after us yelling: 'Go to the zoo, go to the zoo.'

In those days the Negev was a going firm with a solid reputation in our country. The Negev was the objective of all our efforts. It was the future, the anvil for the hammer of the nation. (I pinched this metaphor from my uncle, who's a blacksmith.) On all sides the songs were promising: 'We shall build you, build you up, thirsty, thirsty Negev.' On every wall and billboard, letters that looked just like clenched fists banged and boomed: 'YOUNG MAN, YOUNG WOMAN, THE DESERT IS WAITING FOR YOU.'

But six months had passed since then. Only a few of us were left. We were trying to plant trees. We were trying to put a brake on the wind. (And why should that make them laugh!) We were trying to dig wells. The months had passed and now the time for my leave had come around again, the leave I had been waiting for for so long. At last I would see my old friends, who, I expected, would grab me and not let me go until they had gotten all the tales of the far-famed Negev out of me, its prospects, its absorptive capacity, and so on. They would certainly want to know all about how we live. At the Saturday evening get-togethers at the Café Pinati there was bound to be somebody who would say reminiscently, 'Have you heard, gang, our I-whistled has turned out an important guy. He belongs to a kibbutz in the Negev.' And maybe some inquisitive journalist would get hold of me for the real dope about water in the Negev and so forth.

No sooner had I left the bus after five hours of bone-shaking, than the city received me with a tremendous poster in twelve colors, reading: 'YOUNG MEN, YOUNG WOMEN, JOIN THE POST OFFICE. GOOD PAY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTION.'

Wondering what it was all about, I strode through the streets, confused by the noise of the cars and the crowds, feeling as though I were going through some *wadi* with steep walls and could hear the roar of a flash-flood rushing down behind me.

All of a sudden I bumped into my old friend David, marching along importantly with a portfolio in his hand.

'Hello, David!' I thundered at him.

'Hello, and how are you?' he answered me easily, as though I had come to ask him for a loan. He inspected me from head to foot.

'Where do you work?' he asked me.

'In the Negev,' I proudly responded.

'In which department and which ministry?' he made his question more specific.

'What ministry?' I felt insulted. 'I belong to a kibbutz in the Negev.'

'Oh, it's like that, is it? Well then, so hello and goodbye.' And he turned and went his way.

For six full minutes I stood stock-still, gazing at the spot on the corner where David had vanished from view. When the seventh minute began I sighed, a deep deep sigh, and took my way to my parents' home. Next day I began a series of visits to friends and relatives. My eyes were already accustomed to the change in the atmosphere, so here and there I saw all kinds of posters composed in a queer style. On one billboard I read a proclamation: 'PIONEER YOUTH: FOLLOWING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE, THE BEST FORCES OF PIONEER YOUTH ARE REQUIRED FOR THE LEGAL PROFESSION. PIONEER YOUTH: JOIN THE SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND LAW.'

Then there was a bit from a statement by one of the political parties: 'PIONEER YOUTH IS CALLED UPON TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GREAT OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING THE STATE, AND SHOULD PIONEER IN THE CIVIL SERVICE.'

Or a proclamation in a slightly different style: 'LISTEN YOUTH: YOU WHO WON THE DRY LAND, VOLUNTEER NOW FOR SERVICE AT SEA. JOIN THE MERCHANT MARINE. GOOD PROSPECTS OF RISING IN RANK.'

I dropped in to pay a visit to a former teacher at high school. I was very fond of him. He always left me with the impression that he knew what you were up to behind his back. After the second glass of tea we began reminiscing about his many pupils who had been my classmates. I asked and he answered.

'Where's Shmulik?'

'Shmulik's an air pilot.'

'Where's Shimon?'

'Gone abroad to study.'

'Where's Joshua?'

'Working in a Ministry.'

And so on all down the line. But finally the teacher sighed: 'Ah well, I-whistled, you were a gifted pupil. I hoped that something would come of you, and now you've gone and lost yourself in the Negev. It's a pity, really a pity.'

I went along to pay a visit to Gila, a practical sort of girl who looks well ahead. When she was twelve years old she decided that I would be just about the right shape of husband for her when the time came, and for the past six years she had been trying to persuade me to be a fatalist and resign myself to what had to be. I was fed up with the peculiar pioneer propaganda on the posters, the billboards, in the offices and the cafés, all of which made me feel as though I were crawling in the very dust. So it wouldn't have required much to have me turn to Gila and surrender unconditionally: 'Gila, remember what you told me when we said goodbye six months ago?'

As soon as I came in she fell on my neck with fancy cake and nuts and chocolate, all wrapped up in smiles.

'What are you doing, I-whistled? Where have you vanished to?'

'Me, I'm not in town,' I decided to be careful.

'What are you doing?' she asked.

'I'm not an airman,' I answered.

'What a pity!' she sighed. 'Where do you work?'

'I'm not a government official,' I went on preparing her for the worst.

'How much are you getting a month?' she was still gunning for me.

'I don't have a car of my own,' I dodged the issue in turn.

But there's no dodging Gila. She took me by the shirt button and gave me a look! 'How much do you get?'

I began laughing in sheer despair. 'Three pounds is what I get.'

'Three pounds a day! Why, that's wonderful!'

And she began totting up on her fingers.

'Not a day,' I went on laughing. 'Three pounds a week.'

'A week?' She said in astonishment. 'How's it possible?'

'Yes,' I began explaining, 'three pounds a week and a week off every six months.' And I went on, in sheer relief at being able to get it off my chest. 'I'm a member of a kibbutz in the Negev. What do you think of it?'

She didn't trouble to answer me, but called into the other room: 'Mother, put the white dress back in the closet. I'm not going out this evening, I have a headache.'

And so I reached this cursed night. I wandered round the streets of the town all by myself, after fleeing from my mother's heartfelt persuasiveness: 'All right, so you can be in a kibbutz, but why does it have to be in the Negev?'

My leave passed and it was about time for me to return to my distant hill with its seedlings and rows of trees, planted as windbreaks. And all my friends and acquaintances here would promptly forget me because they were so busy with important matters, and the whole town would go on with all its noise and rush, and nobody would remember the youngsters obstinately setting out each plant and seedling in those distant and desolate wastes. Yet we were the offshoots of this very town, and we were the ones who ensured its peace and well-being. I strolled about through the empty streets. It was already after midnight and I thought about my leave, which had vanished like smoke. I remembered how they had once received us with jubilation; and how the need for bringing the desert back to life had yelled and screeched from every wall. And I came to the conclusion that something had changed during those months. There were new songs in the air, and the old battle cries had been forgotten.

All of a sudden my gloomy thoughts struck against a black object. It was a pot of tar for repairing the roads. I compared the pot to my own mood, and regretfully decided that both of them were equally black. Then suddenly I had an idea. I remembered how when I had been a kid in the youth movements we used to go out at midnight with cans of paste and cover the whole city with posters and proclamations. And I promptly became enthusiastic. Something like a sandstorm began raging through my chest. I must, I decided, give vent to the cry of my desolation. Feverishly I got some pieces of wood and built a fire under the pot. Then I dashed home, furtively put on working clothes, took my bicycle and set off. The pitch was bubbling and boiling in the pot. I took a big brush, dipped it in the tar, and began scrawling huge letters: 'YOUNGSTERS, THE DESERT IS STILL EMPTY!'

My workmanship pleased me, just as though I were a modern painter, that nobody can understand but himself. I went on enthusiastically.

On the plate-glass window of a pharmacy I scrawled: 'THE ONLY CURE IS SETTLEMENT OF THE DESERT.'

I splashed myself all over with tar: I was head over heels in my labors. From house to house I sped on my bike with the tar and

the brush. And with great satisfaction I felt that I was capable of tarring up all of Jerusalem in the course of a single night.

Finally I reached the Parliament building. I dipped my brush in the pot and wrote: 'MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, WHERE ARE YOUR SONS?'

'Don't worry, we're here!' I heard a voice behind me. And two policemen grabbed me round the middle. 'What are you up to? Where are you from?'

'Hands off!' I told them. 'I'm from the Negev.'

'From the Negev?' One of the policemen became alarmed. 'Must be an infiltrator.' He stuck a whistle in his mouth and blew for all he was worth. Some more policemen promptly came dashing up.

'What's happened, what's going on?'

'We've caught an infiltrator,' said the policemen excitedly.

'Infiltrator my foot,' said the other angrily. 'It's simply a lunatic. He's messed up the whole street with all kinds of old slogans about the Negev.'

'Must have read too many out-of-date newspapers and got mixed up,' remarked the third.

'What? Slogans?' a fourth broke in. 'Slogans again? How much did they pay you for it? More incitement? Subversion! Defamation!'

By this time all the policemen were wildly excited, and were shouting weird words in utter confusion. I lifted up my brush and yelled, the way our Chairlady yells at meetings:

'Comrades . . . SILENCE! ! !'

It had a wonderful effect. They shut up at once murmuring: 'Silence! But real silence. Operation Silence!'

'Friends!' I grabbed my opportunity and began to make a speech. 'The expanses of the Negev are desolate and uninhabited. We must settle the land, we must make the desert blossom like a rose. Comrades! Where is our pioneering youth?'

'What do you mean where?' one of the policemen interrupted me. 'The pioneering youth is in the police.' And one of them produced a tired-looking newspaper and turned his flashlight on the lines of print: 'THE POLICE FORCE SUMMONS THE FINEST AMONG OUR PIONEERING YOUTH TO JOIN ITS RANKS. EXCELLENT PAY.'

Here it seems my nerves must have given out. When it was all over, I found myself sitting in the prisoners' cell.

While I was still deep in my thoughts, the officer came in cheerfully. I suppose he was counting on a rise in rank for catching the thieves who had fallen asleep in somebody else's apartment.

'Listen, my lad,' said he to me, 'we'll forget the whole business. Lucky for you I can understand your mood. Once upon a time I was a member of a kibbutz too, but times change, you understand. Me, I'm looking for satisfaction, and in the police I get a kick out of it every time we catch a crook.'

'So you're letting me go?'

'Yes.' And he called back into the policemen's room:

'Sound a general alarm, fetch in all the policemen, take some cans of benzine and clean off all those messy slogans. We've got to clean up the town by morning.'

Then he turned a stern eye on me:

'Imagine, to have to call out the whole police force for the sake of one character like you!'

At the top of my voice I gave him what for:

'You should be ashamed of yourself, you parasite. What are you doing here? Why aren't you in the Negev?'

'Why, what's happening? Have they opened a police station there?' he asked with genuine interest.

That did it.

'Well then,' said the officer, 'Depart in peace. But remember the times in which you live.'

'Messy times,' said I. 'Don't you dare clean up my slogans. These solid citizens must be reminded of what the situation is really like.'

'I'm sorry, but it makes the walls dirty.'

'I'll publish it in the newspapers,' I all but burst out weeping, 'and let everybody know what young folk are being trained for in the State of Israel.'

'We'll deny it, and they won't believe you,' said the officer.

'They'll believe me, you'll see! I'll yell with all my strength.'

'Of course you will, but nobody will hear you. After all, you'll be out in the desert, and that's so far away . . . .'

Translated from the Hebrew by I. M. Lask

FOUNTAIN IN DISUSE, ATHENS

Thunder? a distant footfall? Has somebody
Grasped what governs me, there below
The level of the dirt? For all about me
Alters to drizzle, fine,
Refreshing – or would be, to those who like
A chill and usual manna.
Dances of praise, let the snail perform them;
The peacock lift his worn, soiled tail
Above the frost-nipped oranges.
Undeceived, I hug the scallops
Of my own shell. I bless
No days but those of the tallest beakers,
Whole suns the oleander drained, rocking and fraying
Until I could no longer contain myself:
Above their organs and their objects
Forth through small leaden pipes and ducts
To startle each in light, drunk artisan
And jewel alike of its own setting,
Wanting no climax, shameless, infantine,
My senses leapt and played,
Not before sundown to be called back
By a ghostly overall'd figure
Into the wetted body whose one joy
Was evermore to dream them free again.
Does that answer your question, Eleni and Kosta,
With your books and your complexions,
Already learning, already forgetting?
It is why at all seasons,
Here in the park at the convergence
From no less than six directions
Of little-pebbled, myrtle-bordered paths,
I wait for what I trust
Will not have been withheld forever, or in vain.

ROUGH SKETCH FOR AN AEON IN THE ALPS

One day in autumn an old god sees red,
Screams, drops like something mowed.
Coming to himself in a brown pool of blood,

He blinks round the wrecked room.
There is so much that he will never fathom
Still pounding in his system.

His emotions are those of the shepherd gaping
At huge, half-human tracks, a trail lurching
Upward, most of his flock missing.

He has no choice now, he must think
Winter. *In a trice the mercury has sunk*
Like a numb slug into its bubblebank.

Next, massive cymbals at the lake's heart, once
And only once, clash. Silence.
He nods through white crocheted curtains –

Obedient, the Jungfrau knits her brows.
The shape that stalked him, in her vise,
Can not so much as push up edelweiss.

Queer valley mists, though, have begun to weave
Up past him, forming a ceiling. If
Messages reach him, who is he to give

An answer, a coherent one? His head
Fills with the creaking of a bed
Where someone lies unsleeping, exhausted.

The room just seems to be illumined.
Knowledge of life ebbs from the god's mind.
Creation mourns a friend.

Above the clouds, meanwhile, the mountain's
Whole being confronts the heavens.
She strains, in air that burns and thins,

To keep cool, hide the hard core of her shame,
That body huge and haired, and for all time.
Sweating a steep, clear stream,

She musters atmospheres against the fact,
Pleat-shaded-pink now, amorously abject,
Now gemmed and ruthless. It is quite an act,

And it concludes with avalanches! . . .
Much later, when things could focus, they
hung on the eyelashes
Of the unearthed. A strangeness equal to
the fantasies

Employed to flee it. These it effortlessly
Called back into its corpse. The sun drew near.
The valley
Turned green out of pure susceptibility.

The lake shook on the brink of grave disclosure,
When grunts and tinklings filled the ether,
Then it was the old god's eyes ran over.

He sniffed. Who willed this warmth?
No answer. I am not a god of wrath –
I shall be able to endure the truth!

In its own time came a stench of corruption
In some high place, potent as saffron.
Hallooings from the deranged mountain

Heralded discovery of the beast.
The next day young and old could taste
Their ancestor. It was already harvest.

The god, extinguished at his window,
Gazed into bonfires far below
And manikins black against the glow.

His face worked. He wanted to know why
They did not come after him with cutlery
Instead of feasting on his effigy.

The Educated Girl

by V. S. Pritchett

July. There was a new waitress at Bianchi's.

'Justine!' Mrs. Bianchi called, from her desk at the doorway of the little restaurant. 'Number four.'

The new waitress slipped her sandals back on and walked very slowly, her head lowered and a handful of straight fair hair hanging forward over her face, exposing one large, still, strong grey eye to the customer at table number four.

'We got her from the Art School,' Mrs. Bianchi comfortably explained to an old customer.

'Yes,' said Mr. Bianchi, making a despairing distinction. 'Mrs. Bianchi got her. Staff is the big headache.'

'It's pocket money for them,' said Mrs. Bianchi wistfully, her eyes going very small.

'She's an educated girl,' said Mr. Bianchi suicidally.

'You can't pay the wages,' said Mrs. Bianchi. 'They come out of the slums of Naples,' Mrs. Bianchi opened up sharply on Mr. Bianchi, 'and they want the earth.'

'She's got her shoes off again,' said Mr. Bianchi.

'She's British,' said Mrs. Bianchi who was enormously British.

The new waitress stood by the table waiting for the customer to give her order. The customer was wearing a wide brimmed red straw hat.

'Good morning,' the customer said, 'I think I will have – '

'My sister has a hat like that,' the waitress said. 'She got it at Bourne's. Did you get yours at Bourne's? I want to get one. Hers is yellow, pale yellow. She can't wear strong colours.'

The woman took off her glasses.

'I should like to have an omelette,' the woman said.

'She wears hers with grey,' the waitress said. Her voice was slow, clear and low like a funeral march.

'I tell her to try putting a band round it, nothing fancy, just a plain silk band round it and tie it under her chin – well one could do that, couldn't one? Or let it fall back on your shoulders – it wouldn't suit me but *you* could do it. You have got to be the type. Cheese or ham?'

'A mushroom omelette,' said the woman coldly.

'I can't eat them,' said the waitress, speaking with one foot in the grave. 'It must be an allergy. I love picking them, but I can't eat them. I was reading a book where it said that four hundred people have died in France in the last three years from eating them.'

Her single eye gazed at the woman's hat.

'False Blushers, I expect,' said the waitress. 'Many people confuse the real Blusher with the False.'

The woman did not answer.

Slowly the new waitress walked to Mrs. Bianchi's desk.

'A plain omelette,' she said to Mrs. Bianchi. 'She was wearing a green cloche yesterday. She doesn't speak.'

Mr. Bianchi, whose job it was to stand near Mrs. Bianchi and welcome the customers, closed his eyes with pain. Mrs. Bianchi caught this and took a full, carnivorous look at Mr. Bianchi. He was a green-faced man; a chicken bone with not much left on it that she might have picked up and had a chew at from time to time. She resumed the usual expression of satisfied consternation that was set between her thick black brows and her black moustache. In getting the kind of girl Mr. Bianchi would never run after, Mrs. Bianchi had frightened herself.

At number seven, Mr. Rougemont from the Museum had just sat down and was unloading his pockets. He propped a book against the water jug.

'Soup,' he said to the new waitress.

'Soup?' she said.

'Yes, soup,' said Mr. Rougemont.

She was trying to read the title of his book. He closed it and stared at her.

'On a hot day like this?' said the new waitress.

Heavily made and with a scholarly readiness for controversy, he asked:

'Does soup have to be hot? Isn't there such a thing as cold soup?'

'Yes,' said the girl. 'But it is not good for ulcers.'

Mr. Rougemont put his book aside and with a fighter's grin of pleasure looked around to see what the audience was like. There were few customers, the nearest was the woman in the red hat.

'Who put that nonsense into your head?' said Mr. Rougemont.

'Lettuce, as well,' said the girl. 'The doctor will not allow my father to eat lettuce.'

'Ho!' exclaimed Mr. Rougemont with a glance at the red hat. 'I should think not. We are not rabbits.'

The red hat lowered its face.

'Or salads,' said the girl. 'Americans are always eating salads and they have ulcers.'

'Yes, but I am not an American,' said Mr. Rougemont.

'You have thick white hair,' said the unsmiling girl.

'Bring me some cold soup and stop generalizing, girl – now don't go away, wait for the rest of the order.'

'There is no cold *consommé*,' said the melancholy girl. 'There is salami. Or *pâté de foie*, if you're not afraid of rich things. My father – '

'Do I look ill?'

'Egg mayonnaise . . . '

'Would your father mind if I had a sardine? I don't want a sardine, but let us say your father is about to have a sardine – what would that do to him?'

'Give him gout,' said the girl. 'Like tomatoes and spinach. But he could eat herring.'

'Ulcers, gout,' called Mr. Rougemont loudly to the woman in the red hat. 'Is this a restaurant or a hospital? Now, don't go away. Veal – what is the matter with the veal?'

'It's done with mushrooms.'

The woman in the red hat spoke across two tables to Mr. Rougemont.

'The young lady tells me,' the woman said in a polished way, 'that four hundred people died in France last month . . . '

'In the last three years,' the waitress corrected.

' . . . from eating mushrooms.'

'That is what I will have,' called out the robust Mr. Rougemont. 'And I'll have the potatoes boiled and peas.'

'*Petits pois*,' said the girl in a docile voice.

'I said peas,' said Mr. Rougemont.

'I said,' said the girl.

'You didn't,' said Mr. Rougemont. 'You said *petits pois*. Peas are one thing, *petits pois* another.'

'Yes,' said the girl. 'The only peas we have are *petits pois*.'

The girl's one eye stared at Mr. Rougemont. His eyes stared at hers and went very blue. He had a very white forehead and a large vein began to swell in the middle of it.

'Send Mr. Bianchi to me,' he shouted.

Mr. Bianchi came down from the desk to the table.

'Is there anything wrong, Mr. Rougemont?' said Mr. Bianchi, snapping his fingers at the girl who went back to the desk.

'Where did you get that Cyclops?' said Mr. Rougemont.

'Cyclops?' said Mr. Bianchi, picking up the menu and looking at it.

'No, no, not on there, Bianchi – the girl. With one eye.'

Mr. Bianchi turned and stood with his back to Mrs. Bianchi, moved his hands a little, wagged his shoulders a little, rolled his eyeballs in Mrs. Bianchi's direction.

'She talks like a hearse,' said Mr. Rougemont.

'Five days and she kicks her sandals off. Customers do not like it,' Mr. Bianchi whispered. 'Give me your order. I will see to it.'

The girl now came with a plain omelette and put it on the table before the woman with the red hat. Mr. Rougemont saw it.

'No!' he shouted getting to his feet. 'No, madam, refuse to eat it. You ordered a mushroom omelette. Make her take it back. Waitress, take it back.'

The woman hesitated. Mr. Rougemont looked around at the two or three customers.

'Are you eating what you ordered?' he cried.

There was no answer.

'Cowards,' muttered Mr. Rougemont.

'Mr. Rougemont,' pleaded Mr. Bianchi, touching his arm.

'No,' said Mr. Rougemont, going to the woman's table and taking away the omelette.

'You will drop it,' said the waitress in a sad voice.

'Give it to me,' said Mr. Bianchi, taking it from him.

'I'm in a hurry,' said the woman. 'It doesn't matter.'

The waitress took the omelette and went away with it.

'Bring it back,' called the woman and stood up herself and got the omelette back.

'They owe you an apology, madam,' said Mr. Rougemont, quietening and sitting down at his table once more.

'Now give me your order, Mr. Rougemont. I am very sorry. We have a very nice egg mayonnaise, or the *pâté de foie*. A little *pâté* . . . '

'I said soup,' said Mr. Rougemont, sulking.

'Or tomato salad.'

'Don't you start, Bianchi, for God's sake,' said Mr. Rougemont, getting his breath.

'Shouting is bad for his digestion,' said the girl in a low sorrowful voice, from a distance.

'Soup,' hissed Bianchi at the girl. 'Quick.'

'Roast veal, potatoes and peas,' said Mr. Rougemont, exhausted. Then he said: 'Where is Rosa, Bianchi?'

'She left,' sighed Mr. Bianchi.

'And Maria?'

'They both left,' said Mr. Bianchi.

'Why did they leave?'

Mr. Bianchi shrugged and sighed.

'And the big one, with the golden hair? She was heading for trouble.'

'Lucia,' said Mr. Bianchi in a low voice, with a glance back at Mrs. Bianchi. 'She's still around.' He nodded to the street.

'Ah,' nodded Mr. Rougemont knowingly.

'Yes,' admitted Mr. Bianchi, 'Mrs. Bianchi does not like Italian girls. So – we carry on.'

'Not with that one, you don't, Bianchi,' said Mr. Rougemont. 'I will tell you something about her. People say witchcraft has died out. It hasn't. She's a witch – you be careful, the northern type. I know them. They haunt you.'

'Ha! ha!' said Mr. Bianchi feebly, looking happier. 'How is Mrs. Rougemont? Well, I hope?'

'Of course not,' said Mr. Rougemont. 'I say, they haunt you.'

Soon Mr. Rougemont's food was brought to him. He buttered a roll and nodded cheerfully to the woman with the red hat.

'Still alive?' he said.

The woman smiled with contentment.

'I've been coming here for years,' he said.

'So have I,' she said.

'I'm afraid this one will finish Bianchi,' he said. 'She has a voice like a crypt.'

Presently he saw the girl standing near and watching him eat.

'You get in a temper. It heats the blood, it's bad for the heart,' said the girl gazing at him. 'An income tax collector shouted at my father because he wouldn't pay his taxes. I don't know what he was going to do to him, have him arrested – '

'No,' said Mr. Rougemont equably, with his mouth full. 'They don't arrest. They distrain.'

'And my father said, "If you go on shouting and banging the table like that you'll drop dead".'

'And I suppose he did,' said Mr. Rougemont genially.

'Not then,' said the girl. 'Later.'

Mr. Rougemont put down his knife and fork and gazed at her.

'You have an unusual interest in death in your family,' said Mr. Rougemont, frowning.

'Yes,' said the girl. 'My brother – '

'No,' said Mr. Rougemont, holding up his hand. 'Bring me a fish knife and fork.'

'Are you having fish now?' said the girl.

'No,' said Mr. Rougemont. 'But I like to eat at a table that is properly laid. How do you know I mightn't have wanted fish?'

The girl brought the fish knife and fork.

'Thank you,' he said. 'And another wine glass. Not for me. I already have one.' He nodded at the vacant place on the other side of the table.

'For my friend,' he said.

'You are expecting a friend?'

'Now, do as I tell you. He will want knives, forks, a side plate, dessert spoon.'

The girl got them and waited. Mr. Rougemont went on eating.

'Good. Now, take his order,' he said.

'Is he coming soon?' asked the girl.

'He is there *now*,' said Mr. Rougemont, still eating. 'Take it. He is impatient and hungry.'

The new waitress brushed her hair back from her face and two gray eyes looked like stones at Mr. Rougemont.

'Look after him well,' said Mr. Rougemont. 'Because I shall bring him again tomorrow.'

A very thin smile came to the lips of the girl. She took her pad and wrote a few lines on it. It was Mr. Rougemont's bill.

Mr. Rougemont did not come to Bianchi's for a week or more. But when he did the new waitress came to his table.

'I liked your friend very much,' she said to him. 'He's been in several times.'

'What?' said Mr. Rougemont.

'He's taking me out on Thursday,' she said. 'What are you having today? There is cold soup – but the weather's changed, hasn't it?'

All the King's Horses

by Anthony C. West

Still sad and remorseful for the morkin calf lying there alone in Gallaghbawn* Marsh and apprehensive because he is late, Simon dogtrots home the evening summer road: two miles yet to go and the sinking sun piling swaths of shadow in the woods' lee.

The long dry spell had drained the wet marsh, leaving it safe for exploration, the clean lively Anam† lost in a hundred black-mud lagoons, the water scarcely flowing. He had foraged through the feathery forest of tall reeds the whole afternoon, making it a queachy jungle in his mind, teasing himself with the fear of lostness and, when the fear grew too real, looking to the distant hills and marking again the stable north. So long as travellers knew the north they could not be lost, his mother said.

And then he had come upon the skeleton of the calf, the delicate bones graved whitely on the black ooze. Hunkering before it, at first he named it the remains of the friend he had come so far to find but soon the game faded into nervousness and he began to remember the calf as an eager little heifer with a rich red hide. Not a hair remained, only this mute residue of lime-white bones.

With gathering pity he saw it that wild spring night, floundering and lost, belly-deep in the flood, drifting and struggling deeper into the marsh, its panic to live, its panic to die.

Forced now to admit the reality of his own misdeed, he wished he had never come to the marsh. No one had been sure about the calf's fate. He had fed it that stormy spring night. It was in his charge. They always gave him some animal to take care of, like a cade lamb or chickens. Next morning the shed was empty. Convincing himself it was so, he had sworn the door had been properly hasped.

A careless action and now this quiet altar of bones – the sprung rib-cage, head-box with its awful empty socket, lipless grin, the spinal fretwork tapering to the tail: all cut in accusing ivory by death. He had killed this calf as truly as if he had shot it.

In the silence he had heard an otter chewing reed-shoots like a rabbit. He saw the sly form, slipping away like a dark lie, trembling the tall reeds into a black pool and watching him, its nose just breaking the water.

Standing up, he tried to pull sods from the root-mat in lieu of stones to cover the calf. The roots were tough as tangled fence-wire. He scooped handfuls of glar over the bones but only dirtied them for the next shower to wash clean again. He would have to

* Gallaghbawn – White Moon. † Anam – Gaelic for soul.

wait until the slow ooze buried it in its own time or else return with a long pole and push it under. He eased himself with the thought that few ever came to the marsh as he had come; no one save Saturley, or the Landlord when he was after snipe.

O not to think any more about the declaring bones: to keep within the gracious dream of high summer, each living day's delight prophetic for a better morrow. The bones were hidden, no one had power to find their image in his mind.

The Schoolhouse Cross: right hand, home; left hand, the town and the world beyond it. There was the big cedar in the Temenos, the solid friendly tree with spinning-top cones that, when young, were green scaled eggs. This tree was his friend, a holy tree: he watched it every dull school day, standing there on the corner, noting the winds and seeing every person going the free road. A cedar of Lebanon, Mister Rainey said: by the cedars of Lebanon I lay down and wept, or something like that. Mister Rainey, the good man with a name like a grey day, his pale face the colour of a Novemberly sky . . .

A golden egg in a green nest, the sun sitting on the packed oaks on Darragh Hill, filling the Anam's sculpted valley with yellow light and growing the tree shadows. There were hours of daylight still to be had. Obeying an urge compulsive as a thirst, he scrambled over the wall and climbed the tree, tasting its clean camphoric scent at the back of his throat, the resin gumming his fingers together.

It was easy climbing, up and up the laddered branches, the earth growing smaller, the roads narrower, the Schoolhouse spreading into a flat plan. From plinthy root to reaching canopy the tree tendons moved patiently in his arms, lived in them as muscle lived in a thigh, giving and taking to the small breeze, the wind-sieving branches shushing the air gently around him like a sea.

People go the roads as moles, the Anam brawls and brumbles in its round-rock pools which the floods make by burling stones in holes in the mother rock. Honey bees from the wild nest in the Schoolhouse eaves prey past his face, the laden ones dropping down their flight-lanes, the empty ones rising. When the sun goes behind Darragh they will cease. Now, they hasten against the light's foreclosure.

No one had ever managed to get at the Schoolhouse honey-hoard. Everyone envied it lying there, seeing hundredweights of

golden honey wasting. There were bats in the deep eaves the far side. He could hear them now, quarrelling and bickering like rats in their dusty gloom, waking up against the dying light, evenset their dark-dawn time and foolish honey-drunk moths their prey. Once he had counted a hundred and thirty of them, one by one dropping from their door and flipping away down the dusk. He could not like bats. One had once soared round and round his room, clawing onto the edge of the mirror, making itself two bats, the brown fleas seething through its fur . . .

The long leaf-magic summer surf, the air moist and blood-warm, cattle grazing the dew-wet grass in an open line the fly-free day's end; the taggled shrubberies below, green and rank, the sun never finding a flower on their floor, smelling of sour earth as the marsh smelt, the Anam looping through the Temenos, making an oval pond that glasses the trees' images around the moss-slimed temple of Diana which an old Landlord's wife had had built for herself in the Famine time. The neighbours said she had spent twenty thousand pounds on the garden, hiring a Japanese man from over the sea to make the delicate bridges, flower-lined paths and fairy forests of dwarfed trees. But that was years ago, in the olden times before his father was a boy.

Diana was a half-naked woman, an old decent moon-goddess, his mother said. She sat in her temple which was a dome like the blunt end of an egg standing on twelve slim pillars. In the olden days the gentry had parties there by lantern light, the ladies dressing themselves up in ancient clothes and making a picnic with the redcoated soldiers. Old Johnny Smith could mind his father telling about it, the midges eating the bare shouldered women alive. Diana had a chipped nose now and someone had daubed her front with ram-raddle and painted her cold curly hair and staring eyeballs black. No one ever played in the Temenos any more. It was an unremembered nervous place, its bridges ruined and its shrubs growing over the winding paths and, in spring and summer, the Anam filled it with grey flood so only the temple could be seen, Diana sitting in water up to her bare knees. No one ever wanted to go near the place, even in summer. The Japanese man had made the water sound in twenty different ways over little falls and under the echoing bridges . . .

Everything is quiet and still, turning towards dusk. The birds make no difference to the silence. Chaffinches sing their hearty song, linnets lilt sweetly, chiff-chaffs call their own name over and

over. The swifts are plunging and playing up in the blue sunlight, the swallows looping between the trees, scooping up the dust-thick flies, two culvers gossip sadly in the sounding woods.

The ground-light fills the grey school, the upper room's black-board with mat, rat, cat, bad, mad, man: the lower board still wearing the day's last lesson – the first verses of Psalm Twenty-Three. He sees again the clay-grey knuckled hand of Mister Rainey writing carefully the holy words, the chalk's slim finger batsqueaking on the upstrokes.

Mister Rainey is a good saved man. He prays often, teaching God, his eyes closed, his puce lips pouting as they say great things about God's goings on the earth.

Simon wished helplessly he could be half as good as the Master. He knew he was not good. He was lazy and careless and he smoked when he got the chance. Smoke today, strong drink tomorrow, Mister Rainey said.

He tried hard to be good, saying the Lord's Prayer every night and sometimes the Twenty-Third Psalm, saying one or the other even through the day. He could not understand the Lord's Prayer but he liked the sound of the Psalm. Mister Rainey kept telling him he was growing up, he was almost twelve now and a big boy and should be learning to be responsible: irresponsibility always led to trouble and deceit and then, before Jack Robinson, there were lies and wrong-doings. Times and his father was irate over his carelessness, saying he could hardly believe he was right in the head. Most times his head seemed to feel all right except that things like a kingfisher or the spring's first swallow always made him want to weep. Big boys should not go about with the tears so close to their eyes.

The Landlord: coming down the road with a handful of letters for the post. He freezes to the cedar's limb, hoping the four golden retrievers will not scent him. He is trespassing and does not draw a breath till the Landlord goes on past the cross.

Down below, the reptilian cypress fronds slowly part. Archer Saturley, the gamekeeper with his lean gun, swims through them. He glances after the Landlord, standing behind the chest-high wall. Propping the gun against the wall, he lights a cigarette, flipping the match over onto the road and then peeing, the blue thread of smoke rising from the cigarette until Simon can smell it.

It is time to be going. The treetops on Darragh are beginning to

dance their shadows down the valley. When Saturley departs, he will shin down and get back on the lawful road.

He knows Saturley well but is scared of him. He is a clever man, an Englishman, who has medals from the war and a limp in his left leg. Every Silence Sunday he shouts orders at the row of the King's old soldiers outside the church and salutes the Landlord who has more medals than anyone else, half his chest covered with them. Saturley has his job because of these things, the Landlord also fought in the war and got a limp.

Everyone says Saturley is a very brave man. Many call him sir for his refined accent. He has told Simon about the war and battles and poisoned gas and no-man's-land, the bit of land the armies were fighting for. He dresses like a gentleman in the country, wearing plus-twos, thick grey stockings, brown boots with high uppers, a brown Norfolk jacket and grouse-shooter cap. His high half-bald head has pale damp-tallow skin whenever he removes the hat. He keeps saying he is only thirty-five and blames the war for his condition although he seems healthy enough. 'Look at me 'ands, Simon boy', he often said, holding out his big brown hands with their sunk pink blue-rimmed fingernails. The hands always had a jerking tremor. 'Shell-shock', he would explain, sadly proud.

He seemed to be lonely for the war, often singing sad songs about it. Sometimes he talked about Paris and the girls there until he realized he was making the boy embarrassed and would laugh, saying: 'Rare ole times! Jiggy jig, trey bong ha ha ha . . .' poking Simon slyly in the ribs. Sometimes these pokes hurt, his hands were so heavy.

Solemn, his face was likeable, but when he laughed it changed and wrinkled into a new face, the eyes dancing under their heavily tufted brows and the long dog-white teeth gleaming as though the mouth were snarling and not smiling at all. Simon admired him for his craft and skill, he could shoot a snipe with one hand, but he never managed fully to like him. He had great powers and could arrest poachers as good as a policeman.

Several people go past the cross, taking one or other of the three roads; Nell Ellis talking to herself on her bicycle, her skirts up round her thighs. Saturley dodges down behind the wall, out of sight, not wanting to be seen. He could be waiting for a poacher but there were few poachers this end of the parish. It was too near the Manor . . .

Singing, Olive May Agatha Dempsey comes down the road from Hewett's farm where she works by day. She is a three-quarter-wit serving girl. Her mother gave her the three names, unable to decide which one she liked best and the neighbours say that the girl herself does not know if she is Olive or May or Agatha.

Simon likes her. He does not mind if she is short some wit. People have also said he seemed loose a screw at times and the school-children often tease him by chanting Simple Simon the Pieman. He has been to school with Olive May Agatha. She was always slow and dense. He knew Mister Rainey frightened her and closed her up. Rainey beat her very often and sometimes made her water on the dusty floor. The big boys teased her, lifting her skirts in the playground. She never clashed on them. Rainey would have given them twenty on the backsides, his foot on their backs and holding them on the floor.

She had come to school one morning with rags stuffed down her dress to make breasts like Miss Lowrey. She loved Miss Lowrey who thought she was being made fun of and was angry. Saturley goes with Miss Lowrey in a quiet way, walking her along the Sunday evening roads and talking but never tumbling her on a bank like the other courters.

Last spring Olive May Agatha came down the fields with a great armful of white blossom, her face laughing through it. 'An oul wile tree,' she had said, amazed. 'I foun' them on an oul wile bush . . .'

They were lovely flowers with ice-white tassels, not a leaf to be seen, just dry sticks bursting flowers, a purity of white foamy blooms with a thin sweet scent like spring. She had told him where to find the bush. It stood alone in the unawakened woods, a dome of resting light, a white beeskip, a moon-tree. So beautiful it was, so faithful, he had wept for it a little. He could see why it had excited Olive May Agatha. It would have excited anyone, making its beauty there in the cold dark wood. Several times he had returned to see but it had changed into an ordinary leaf-green bush among the others . . .

A cool breeze sways the cedar. The bee traffic has ceased. The sun is behind the Darragh trees so they look like a golden bonfire. A sparrowhawk, about for its supper, comes to a nearby elm, melding into the grey-brown bark soon as it sheathes its wings. It sees him and falls away from the branch, making a long glide down

the ride, a wren whirring warningly, a blackbird piping, the swallows coming to chase it through the big beeches over the Anam . . .

Saturley is talking to Olive May Agatha across the wall. He is gaffing her as though surprised to see her. She always comes this way home at this time. Clocks could be set on her. He is joking her to come over the wall. He will be wanting to court her. She is fifteen now, pretty and a woman.

'What's in there but oul trees an' thin's?' she teases laughingly, flattered by his attention.

'What y'don't see won't do y'hany 'arm,' he replies, making his smile.

Randan Reilly goes by on his rattling bike, smiling at the girl and nodding to Saturley who says, smiling in a fatherly way: 'Hello, Tom. Nice evenin' . . . ' although he suspects Randan for being a poacher. Then he says loudly to Olive May Agatha: 'Y'd bettah be goin' 'ome now, lass!'

She frowns at his sudden change but he says something else in a low voice, moving along the wall. She laughs loudly again, swinging her body about and saying that she cannot climb walls. He holds out his hands, they reach from the cypress as though the dark tree has sprouted a pair of living hands.

The girl moves slowly towards these hands, looking at them and laughing through her body. They beckon impatiently. Slowly, teasingly, she raises her own small hands, pecking at Saturley's. He snatches, catching one and then the other.

She hangs back a moment, still laughing as though being tickled and then she walks nimbly up the wall, leaning back from the strong arms. Some eggs fall from a pocket and plock to the ground. She tries to look back, saying regretfully: 'Oh, me eggs.' But Saturley pulls her on, lifting her off the top into the smothering cypress, coming out behind it, one arm round her back and holding her arms, the other under her thighs. She struggles a little, still laughing but not so brightly. They look like small squashed gnomes from the height and the girl is very small and childish against Saturley's big chest. He is a large man, large as the Landlord.

Simon often went down the woods with Saturley. Going with him was not trespassing. He taught many things: how to lay snares, to move through cover with stealth, to read footprints, to

stand stook-still, to live in eyes, ears, nose and skin like the slavering setters.

Saturley lives alone in a bearden of a cottage under overgrown rhododendrons behind the old Council Quarry with its suffering slabs of blasted rusty rock. He eats and sleeps in one dank, green-gloomed room that smells of wood smoke, dogs, ferrets, wild animals and stale tobacco. Traps, snares, dried skins of foxes, otters, badgers hang on nails on the walls. Simon could never stay too long in the house. It was the smell, not the slovenliness, that made him tight and nervous. It brought a surly sick-sweet taste into his mouth.

Sometimes in the long walks through the woods, he had suddenly been afflicted by this same nervousness, Saturley leaving his faint odour behind. He would linger until he could slip away into the bushes, hiding until the man ceased looking and calling. Next time he would be annoyed but always consented to further wandering. He was lonely.

But Simon never went again after the hawk. That was in the middle of May. Saturley was rearing pheasants. A female sparrow-hawk was feeding her brood on the chicks. A crafty bird, she was, clipping behind the hedges and waiting in a tree a long time before she swooped, usually taking the largest chick available and winging away with it over the field, twisting low between the coops so the gamekeeper did not dare shoot.

He danced, shouted and cursed with rage ten times a day, the squawking hens warning of yet another raid. The hawk seemed to know his movements, even his thoughts, and never allowed him to call an hour his own, rising him at dawn and keeping him in his eyes till dusk. Simon felt sorry for him and guilty for his own stubborn allegiance to the wild free bird. He paid Simon a half-crown in sixpences to look for the nest. Simon finally found it, high and safe in a tall lime, but could not bring himself to name it.

Then Saturley found a dying chick, one too big for the hawk to wing. He sat six traps round it, disguising them cleverly. The hawk returned and got caught by a leg.

He threw his hat in the air, his pale sweating head gleaming in the sun. Carefully, he locked the bird's wings to the shapely shoulders, muttering: 'Ah, bastad! Bastad! Bastad!' in his polite cold-cruel voice, hitting the bird on the head with a knuckled forefinger each time he swore at it.

It was a lovely bird, golden as a sun-mottled wheatsheaf, a bird

taut as a bent bow of brown yew: the flat head, the arrogant beak, unblinking eye deep with relentless courage, the unchanging scornful smile, the trap-broken leg hanging by a thread; not struggling nor crying but still quick to rend with beak and talon.

Saturley holds it by the outspread wings over the fire as though it hovered there, his face grimaced against the smoke and sickly feather-stench, the bird's black eyes wide with unblaming amaze.

And amazed by the fire's silent power upon living limbs, Simon watches the taloned legs change into pruned twigs in frizzled brindled breeks as, witlessly, he shares the bird's awful unconsumed patience that is deep as space, endless as solar light.

Saturley cracks a wing-wrist with a bright snap, handling the bird carefully, keeping his hands away from the beak. He sits it on the grass, hunkering before it, his jaw clenched, mumbling through his teeth coarse swear-names as though he runes and spells an archetypal hawk.

And the bird, broken but unbroken, ruined but quite perfect still, sits there and inwardly disdains the torture, knowing the pain of the upper air's rafale, the limp wingtip trailing, the unblinking eyes, the haughty hawk-lord hateless facebeauty without plea for better death: wings, scimitars of skill, once close as love to winds' unseen tumblefall and steep rake, bragging stoop, swoop, twist and tight spiral in sun-turned air . . .

Staring so strongly through his tears, Simon sees, not broken hawk, but a bright peerless birdform, a winged shining thought not joined at all to morbid matter.

And then, defeated by the remorseless chiding of the bird's unarmed nobility, Saturley casts about, seizing a stone and dropping it from his height with a soft-sick grass-dump, blinding out the bird, the stone its cairn with two wingtips either side like Hermes' heels. Simon feels a faintness of relief it is over . . .

And high above the beeches and cedars in the ride, the active male turned lazily, searching, mewing its mourning call. Saturley looked up, almost in fear, glancing quickly down at the winged stone to sure himself the hawk on high was indeed another. He swore, running for the gun and blasting off both barrels together. But the male bird was too far for harm and turned gracefully away, slicing down the back of the wind . . .

As though from nowhere, a tiny sage-green wren weaves cleverly through the cedar's matted palmate branches, over, under and over. It has a spot of orange flame on its head, a little speck of

warm brilliant orange. O, it is a neat bird, a golden-crest, a rare and shy one not easily seen, its eggs seedsmall. He puts out a kind hand to it, gently hopeful to touch the magic of it and magically, it disappears . . .

Saturley bursts through the cypress below, looking about, moving swiftly along the wall for his gun, the elastic fronds blending together again like water as he disappears.

Silence: the solemn trees waiting for their night, the Temenos a pool of green dusk around the mushroom of Diana's deserted shrine.

Home: O never before was a home so safe and necessary. Swiftly down the barking tree that rasps the skin off the inside knees, crashing from springy branch to branch – not stealth now, haste, tumbling out unto the sad brown carpet of scented spines and ovate cones.

He puts his right hand on a turd, instinctively sniffing the hand and immediately retching, his stomach gathering into a hard revolted knot. He kneels on the spines, waiting for his belly to settle, not looking anywhere, swallowing repeatedly the rush of saliva.

A soft movement – to his right. Without moving his head, he turns his eyes to it. Saturley is there, standing there, his brown face a green-yellow, his eyes burning darkly under their gathered brows: standing there tree-bole still. The boy gives himself impulsively to him, the nausea changing into a sickness of empty pity. But the gun: Saturley is moving the gun forward, running the left hand out along the barrels, the right elbow crooking round the butt as he has often done before when stalking a fox or a rabbit.

Simon is rolling over on the dusty road, the light still strong after the under-tree gloom. He does not remember getting there. He must have clean-jumped the five-foot wall. The thick wheel-ground dust chalks his clothes and bemusedly, as if it is important he rises and beats himself, smelling again the shit smell on his hand and sweating with revulsion.

The unclean hand upsets him more than anything. He holds it out as though wounded, absently noting Olive May Agatha's broken eggs, the crushed white shells, the yolks in their opaque pools sliming through the verge-grass like thick blood. Vaguely, looking at them, he feels he has seen everything before.

He hurries up the road to the Anam bridge, the same bridge on

which his mother said he had been found one summer dawn as a newborn infant by his father. There is a loud report in the hollowness of the Temenos. Pigeons blunder out of the larches where they had gone to bed and whistle off through the dusk, the shot smacking round the chest of Darragh Hill and dying into the black oaks above.

He goes to the wall, moving awkwardly along the ditch, loath to use the fouled hand, until he comes to a thin place in the laurels that allows him to look down into the neglected garden . . .

Surfeited with horror that is also a leaden sort of peace, beyond all panic to exist or to die, he goes on up the brae, stopping at a runnel and washing his hands, using glar for soap. But the odour still clings, the wet hands drying chill in the twilight's breeze that comes as water down the steep hill.

Night, night's time, star time; the Plough there, pointing its faint lodestone star. The sun has gone, the earth is black and blue, the high swifts still rich in distant light that curves around the turning world; and the bats, leathern swallows of the night. gibbeting about, hawking the first meal of their dark day.

Climbing the hill, he sees the landfall. There is a narrow caol of startling lemon light, edged with black, in the north-west, the brown comber of the shiftless hills riding into it and, in the east, a magnified moon lifts through her pink-tinged silver haze . . .

Home: he does not want supper but it is politic to eat. His mother is scolding his late return. She stares at him through her reading specs that glaze her black eyes: her milk-pale skin, black hair, the red blouse shaped to her full high breasts. She is saying he does not deserve supper but she boils him an egg and puts two tomatoes on his plate.

He breaks the end of the egg with the back of the spoon and smells the stale ordure on his hand, his stomach knotting again. Mumbling an excuse, he goes to the scullery to wash his hands, scrubbing them under the tap, again and again, and still the stink persists. He puts his mouth to the running tap and sucks in water. It is clean and cold. He holds his head under it, letting it flow around his neck until he cannot draw a breath.

His mother is curious, worried, asking what he has been up to, saying his father is out looking for him with a stick, implying he had better get to bed before the angry man returns. He cannot tell her anything. He does not want to. Like the calf, he will bury everything into himself and gradually forget. She is righteously

averse to all tales about violent and sexual things, naming them depraved and filthy. She lives in her own clean strict world, not wanting to know anything about the cursing and carrying-on outside her door. She keeps pressing. He might ease her by telling about the calf but somehow, it has all begun with the calf, way back in the spring, way back in springs he cannot now remember.

Bed: slowly up the steep narrow stairs, sniffing his hand automatically. The sun has stored his long-day warmth in the upper floor and the moon has found his room, a pile of moonlight lying in the corner, a rounded shape like the temple and there, threshing through the pool of batblack shadow is Saturley. O, never now would Saturley chance to find the lost calf.

Swiftly, he undresses and slides his body down the chill bed, staring at the splash of moonlight and whispering the Lord's Prayer and then the Twenty-Third Psalm. Soon as he stops, he sees in the moonlight the Marsh of the White Moon in a silver silence, the slender silver reeds, the black pits now all moulds of silver . . .

His mind refuses to stop working. He keeps on whispering the Psalm, whispering himself into a quarter sleep and going through the endless horn-dry marsh again. He is searching for something that he knows he will find and does not want to find and yet must keep on searching.

Yes, there it is, the white moon tree and under it lies Diana. No, not Diana, it is his mother. No, not his mother either. It is Olive May Agatha, half naked with tomato-red breasts and black vacant eyes.

He hunkers down before it, making his eyes admit again the truth of their seeing. Yes, it is Olive May Agatha. She is dead, dead under the white tree she found and soon the black ooze will bury her. He looks up at the tree, smelling its sickly sweet scent that is the same smell as Saturley's cottage. Saturley? There, over there in the black pool, like an otter watching slyly . . .

He starts up. The room is dark, the moon has moved on. He sniffs at his sweating hand, the smell is becoming his own now, the hand will smell like that all his life, it will never allow him to forget. And all the time, as though a strange voice were saying it, his lips are whispering the Psalm.

Detective Frump's Spontaneous & Reflective Testament

by Gregory Corso

All Things Are Sustained in Being, or, simply, OATMEAL *is a detective story, really, written with happy abandon – the beginning,* Detective Frump's Spontaneous & Reflective Testament, *tells no story, nor is meant to. Yet its meaning* to *the story is to create for Frump a state in which he can no find wrong, and so hold love and sympathy for all things – Frump is the Force who sees all things as excusable because they* ARE, *and who sees all things as* GOOD *and* GRAND, *except one, his adversary, the Anti-Force, who he sees as a terrible downright* WRONG, *and can find neither love nor sympathy for him. Frump excuses even condones! murderers, warlords, dictators, plotters, rapists, pimps, in short, he atones every imaginable crime – his only concern is to ferret out and destroy his Anti-Force. Now who can this Anti-Force be who is so much more terrible than any imaginable crime? If Frump hails all man and all things, how then can he not hail his 'foe'? His Anti-Force, by the way, is a man.*

Thus this novel is but a repeat of that classical theme, man's noble and victorious search for that 'evil' which besets all man.

Joy and victory! Victory that a child can grow a man in this age with its bountiful variations of death – achievement equal to the centenarian of ancient Rome –

Joy to what this age has come to, no tyrannical domination here except for those who yet wear the tress of tradition, and like to the tress of Queen Hatshepsut all's crusted green; all ages go on, no age comes to, going quicker now, what once took a generation now takes a decade, quick! one can only, go! one cannot listen to what WAS said, one can only listen to what IS said, it's the NOW, eternities of the NOW! And the Now wearies, this toothsome consistency, this gobble-gobble immediacy, and ancient Egypt gets farther & farther away, this age that knows no Thoth condemning Set but Batman imprisoning the Joker –

Joy to life to man to terms & worms and everything I can! Joy to the English language its dynamo force to switch new consciousnesses, to express what's seen, what's heard, to hear to read to write to speak yell curse soothe console, O hybrid responsible irresponsible sound! Champion of Idea! Favorite of favorites! Stern goofy elegant hybrid language! You many accents platitudes provincialisms colloquials! Battered jargon, healthy argot, frown grunt groan gesture giant & dwarf speechtongue! Blind with the sound of you! Deaf with the sight

of you! Eyesound exult! Ephemeral Cypress Paracide Moribund Ethereal Paragnosis Splacturion Matrones Spirit of the Barns EAGLMDS! Talk on all levels! Lower East Side Dese Dem & Dose Vermont drawnlung where now the brown cow knows! FNZWHVO silver alphabet!

Joy to gods goddesses demons saints angels heroes! the magnificent cult of the dead, divinities of birth & death, the creation of storms & winds, fire & water, earth and all its epics, histories, genii, pantheon of sacred animals, Elam deities, joy!

Joy to New York City to Sunday empty elegant Lexington Avenue to 42nd Street wild knowing movie audiences laugh & horror movie to lights, to bar snaky neon to green prescient to green & red traffic to white flash to blue gotham to amber Long Island –

Happiness to children! a rabbit for all! grown-up influence fini! fine music, great books, evident dreams, children!

Joy to nothing useless nothing unwanted, to all Dharma, Buddhas & Bodhisattvas, Eskimos, Incas, the Chinese Paradise, the Happy Hunting Ground, joy! Exult the views from north south east & west! Embrace your name your family your heretical Palaeolithical bison-head and cloven feet! Express the goat the pig the helmet the rock the hierarchial helmet casque officiating before nobody-knows-why WAR! Entertain the littlest and biggest tree with a ring of girls in white rosed dresses, dance!

Joy to Paris at evening! Paris evening when sun brings glory to sky, color to clouds, and the clouds move eastward, and the flags and weathervanes and river and traffic and people all move eastward! The egg of the east is designed for joy! Joy to Reason, to Logic, to the I Ching, and the good old French intellect! Vast intellect France with your frail authority and infernal regions, joy! Marie-Antoinette, good happy-snappy angel delicacy, joy! Joy even if they held your body without its head, even if they raised their hats and cried: MARIA-ANTONIA SELECT! O glorious platinum wig of history! Yes even if they held your body like a dead Greek courtesan, and your head like Perseus holding Medusa, or even if they held your body like an opened bottle of ink, and your head were the dribbling cap, know that they dipped their fingers in your neck, and wrote dazzledom, good old French history!

Joy to the Future! when Time will judge right when Space proves wrong, right or wrong, no wrong, no wrong, when Space is no See no Touch no Taste no Smell no Hear, when they no longer

want your Time, when they want your Space, and who is THEY! They do not exist, they are against your own FOR: they say the WORD is the way, yet there is no door; they say save all keys and compare them that one is the same unlike the rest; the rest are different like the one; this one will open no door and let you in, inside you will receive words alien to THOUGHT, they say they say, they always say, and who is they, but joy to them nonetheless!

Joy to the telling of night, to the feeling I might, to the which way I turn left or right, to the return, the telling, and what's there to say when there's day, DAY! O so much happiness in day there IS I know, and so much more and happily so! There's love and dream and joy and sorrow, strength and weakness and always tomorrow; and when I look up at the sun I do not claim a conclusion with nothing begun, no! I claim horses!

Joy to horses! Horses by the sea are listening to me, do you suppose they are listening to me, breathing & heaving & naying to me; horses of night are there, horses and horses of light and delight and nightmare, they are there, completely satisfied with the sea, completely satisfied with me, O incredible untellable gathering the thoroughbred thunder the mustang wonder they come from the plains like heavenly rippling trains from the fields like an army of mahogany permeating shields from the mountains like mountains and more and more to the shore and they become the shore, O horse world! Horse eternity! I hear horses riding and horsemen riding, I hear in the distance the songhoof of riding, I see the might of their hoofprint on the earth, I see their manes like banners flowing like wind, O heraldic cavalry! I see them in dreams I see them in visions I see them in wild and strange apparitions, they are rising from the sea with manes of gales and tails of rains, horse serpent, horse whale, Neptune riding on his seathrone, the horses rear their heads, whip their fishlegs, and they are falling from the sun with birdgrace with bright attire with legs of fire and wings of Pegasus flyer – O horses of Mexico jumpers and broncos and the sophisticates of Tally-Ho! Horses of Himalayas Ghengis Khan and his screaming army of flashing helmets thundering down sundown on sleeping Cathay! Horses of Arabia riding riding while the dark muezzin chants from top the mosque while the bald Ottoman wings his sabre slashing & crashing in a battle of 10 thousand men & horses, O horses of war! Pintos of Sioux! Stallions of Alexander! Mustangs of cavalry! Steeds of Bengal Lancers! Run run O softfooted Fuzzy Wuzzy dancers! And

with the horses of war the red horse of hell, the bone horse of Death, the crowfield of horsedeath, the flat sides, the stiff legs, the jutted teeth, and the crows pecking the wide eyeless eyes – And still I think of horses, the magical horse of Achilles, the ill-speaking horse, the comical horse of St George, the donkey horse of Christ, the workhorse of Italy, the white show horse to music and obedience never going to the toilet on stage, the icy asphalt city horse, and the horned horse, the manhorse, the winged horse, yes! these are my horses the horses of myth and dream who come to me who never pass who nibble my hair as they would grass, the Trojan horse, joy!

Joy to the American Indian! Give proper ceremony, o Pauwau! Revive the Mandan buffalo dance! Fling wompsikkucks over Skahnyahteihyuh! The plains the wolves, en-a-ban-dang America! O flay the tortoise shell rattles, scatter cornmeal, offer roses to mudheads, O gentle Chippewa, o gentle gentle Pottawatomi! Eat! Turkey sweet-potato squash pumpkin tapioca succotash; drink! sassafras sweetbirch wintergreen; play! lacrosse! hold firm the racquets; sing! medicine song white dog song grassdance song! O how I think the Mandan village all covered with snow the Lacrosse game on ice, the barren trees, the blanketed chiefs, the coup, the coupstick, the shield, the war whistles, the morache, the bow drill; O how I think America beyond the ten lost tribes of Israel, the Naskapi, the Montagnais, the Sauk, the Yuchi, and the golden Caribou akin to the sacred Calf; the saintly calumet its tuft of greendye horsehair, kinnininnick America! Ho! Running Antelope! Yellow Bear! Red Cloud! Ho-yip! White Hawk! Wakonda! Talako! Kiwago! Sun star snow sky thunder river night rock lake ice wind water moon mountain rain forest day cloud fire earth! Elk beaver deer crow chipmunk woodchuck duck eagle fox rabbit weasel cricket lizard snake! Ho the arrow the canoe the wigwam the wampum the moccasin the pipe the bow the parfleche! – Who in his own the laughing Koyemshi dog-clowning the Southwestern moon, ip-yip! The Mighty One, TIRAWA ATIUS! dreams the Pawnee death, the lone chief dying on the travois – Who in his own rode hills valleys rivers plains, wore skin, masks, charms, papoose, the Mighty One, TIRAWA ATIUS! O they are the redmen feathers-in-their-head-men down among the deadmen, pow wow!

Joy to milk! Yes milk! With all this universe about me I feel big because of milk, goatmilk cowmilk pigmilk humanmilk! Cows! I

want you to know that wherever I go the universe goes, so come! Come because I see all givers of milk as vast hippodromes in which tournaments of milk rally! Not so much of milk really, but of drink! We drink slow streams by which all drinking arouses an extra bit of us, ourselves, and drinking we condemn our houses, yes! Mothermilk churned to butter on fatherbread! All houses are drink, and all rooms are thirst, with walls with wombs for doors and tired children, doors in which to enter and sleep on nice floors on warm fur rugs – How odd the gateways and pathways deserting us leaving us goggle-eyed beneath a Fakir, the creep! What does he know of sleep, that palpitating solitude? 'Well' he says 'not draining it with fast talk or song, damn if I know' – Then what is drinking for? A broken man broods over the world in a pushcart and we, in passing, ignore him, so where do we start? Nowhere and end there? We drink slow streams diligently, we know spiders for their spinning, we know swallows by day, and owls by night, we know a lot, yet . . . drunk in our blood of chains, 20 broken-throated birds embrace our veins, some pulling them like worms – not much joy in this kind of drinking, so! only the joy drink! The Dr Pepper drink! The swim in the vat-ichor on the nectar brink! The hand drink, the boygirl loving kissspit drink! Highball shot boilermaker rotgut Blatz! Dignified tea, hectic coffee, hot chocolate for me! Water! Mandrink! Pedigree of all drink! Wine whisky mead soda beer coffee tea come to you to BE! Mental ramification! Maker of all drink! Miracle water into wine! but never wine into water! Without you in the desert without you at sea, o no no NO! Water shortage! Cities alert! Spare! Ration! Paint gold the reservoir! Have centurions guard the gate! Hear the sober Silenus calling 3rd Avenue into the woods! See the thirsty out-flushed Hermes-runner reach for stardrink! Drink! And if I drink and invite all man to drink from my dreamdrink bloatedgles-floaty they'd be! for where I drink is more than the favorite haunts of Bacchus Bacchae! And if I drink water and I pee in water and it goes back to water and becomes water then by this cycle water will, as air, always be – And if I spill water I waste not, and if I disappear a few drops on a hot pavement and the sun drinks it up, it will become part of a cloud and appear again as it always has with clarion thunder announcement and plentitude – My cat drinks you, my flower drinks you, everybody drinks you! O human animal vegetable sameness! elemental manbond – Joy to everything that keeps man

together! be it drink laughter sorrow desire love war! Money! Money keeps man together, yes! money keeps things going! so joy to money!

Joy joy to money! Money I never hated you! Good God how could I! Did I not cherish you! Did you not make my life! Yes! Look at what happened to me when I stole you begged you worked for you! You were noble to me, money! Never were you humiliating! When once I had much of you I didn't know what to do! I couldn't eat! You always made me so excited! Yes! What I didn't like doing with you was bargain you, bank you, hoard you, refuse you, stingy you, no! yet at times did all this to you, why not! You are for that too! But God how I love to gamble you! Win you! Lose you! Well I know there are some things in life made more valuable than you, rare things like museum things or people, and that's all right, because if you were ALL MIGHTY then you'd not be! And the great thing about you is that you ARE! So be! Dollar sign as musical looking as a cleft! ONE CENT, O merciful penny! Penny candies! How they fed my hungry body when I was young and ate from subway penny candy machines! Nickel! with your straight-nosed Indian chief and shapely buffalo! Dime! Artistic Cellini thin! O perfect coin! Quarter! Two-bits! how I looked for you my first gift! having lost you in a little orphan room days & days looking for you under the bed, the sink, in the cracks of the floor, in my pockets over and over, on the window sill, on top the closet, in the closet, I never found you, but O how I remember you! eternal ransom of Rome! And the half-dollar, that's all they gave the prisoners in the TOMBS, bills were prohibited because they said people will steal and people could kill themselves by squeezing out the green dye and drinking it, so everybody's pockets were jangling and weighed with you! O many the nights in a cell with nothing to do I studied that graceful gown flowing lady and the raying sun at her feet – sorry to let it go the next day for cigarettes and pie – Ah good old dollar bill! Ace! Buck! How effeminate you always smelled! What face powders & perfumes you slept in! Ladies know you more! And did I not once find you in a church long long ago in an envelope on the floor and snatched you from God and ran out and bought marbles colored crayons picture cards, O the sacrilege! And did I not once roll you up and put you in my nose to sniff up cocaine! Yes! And that strange 2 dollar bill, Jefferson in green! What an unusual color for him! because I

always somehow imagined him to be orange – Lincoln! Good five spot! Good fin! How right you are in the hands of Negroes! whether thrown down in dice or put crumbled on the counter of liquor or masking a wealth of ONES! And you! how at the age of ten I stole you from step-mother and ran off to Coney Island, my first journey into the world, alone with you, spending all day with you; O grand unforgetable day! And ten, you are my favorite, not so much because of Hamilton's romantic face, but because you always made me feel rich and secure whenever I had you, yes! but more than you, more to man! Joy to man! As best I can! The good scope of him is history that is old & ironic; not so much modern history unfulfilled & blurred, so back to the unbleak fierce violent days! The Greeks & the Jews! Chaos groping behind while exalted dignity senses itself in an epic of itself, early Homer beginning the network an eloquent dot of man making legendary his present that legend be magnificent to my present! O but my present, here is no chain-reaction that World War II be as the Trojan War, not with the goddess Eris being refused a wedding seat, no praise of man in my war-time; wars have lost their legendariness, but even so! what is done is done! and what is done is perfect! and one can only say 'if' and 'if' serves no remedy, no! Good old Aeschylus who held the spirit of man like a great rock over wormy disaster, who told me long long ago that God was a power without wisdom and man was wisdom without power, and after having read Prometheus Bound & Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, wrote a strange poem that had nothing to do with both Prometheuses, but felt that it belonged somehow, and so wrote: 'I dreamed the devil

lay red & naked
on my table
And over him I stood
in a sack cloth
drenched with blood –
Though my hands were bound ,
with my teeth I was able
to dissever
myself from his navel
O how sad I did not dream
his birth from me!
Or before that! the partner
of my pregnancy –

And still I don't know what it's got to do with the Prometheuses, but I felt it had something to do with it, and so, so! on to explore man I go! The Bible! O great Jew! Man is hard stem of you! O noble survivor! The Greeks are gone, the Egyptians have all but vanished, and yet your unsteady testament still holds! The fall of man stands a lie before such as Beethoven, yet prouds a truth before such as Hitler; was always afraid of the Bible when young because I thought it was CHURCH! And church was always another language, but taken in history Church is lovely too! because when I look back the path I see starts not with first memory but with all history; and I move on; the path is endless; and when I die somewhere ahead I well know there'll be a relay to continue the tread; yes Bible whose Moses makes gold the thing that is man, whose Joshua is pure disciple to the greatness in man, whose funny Samson was a naïve Hercules, whose Saul's tragedy is the highest tragedy of man, whose giant-killer was the tender lover of man, whose King of diamonds loved many strange ladies, whose Isaiah doomed all man kneel & atone, whose books of psalms sing in Stravinsky, whose Job scientifically sees God as something to blame, whose Ruth allows girls a wonderfully enchanted world, whose Judith in all museums looks at me while she dumps Holofernes, poor head in a sack, whose Susanna forstayed the beards of old men – And Christ, the victory of man! who at times though I see no stranger than Sitting Bull, all were men, all were victory!

Victory of life is man! King of the universe! A creator of God! A creation of God! A cycle unto himself, breath of himself, born of himself, dead and risen and there or gone of himself! he thrives as a being and sustains all things in being! He was never meant to be understood, he is limitless; what is studied of him is insufficient he subtracts of himself, augments himself to himself, and if ever he's flung among the stars surely there'll be a danger he'll have to overcome, be it a cosmic anenome, or a fierce starpard, he'll excel! And his beauty? Greater the rose? The bee doesn't even think so! When man sings birds humble into piety! What history can the whale empire sing? What genius ant dare break away from anthood as can man from manhood? Man's mind searchlights all! and sees more than any unfuture insect. King Agamemnon! Mortal man! Ah but immortality is man's grandest madness; man is mad, mad, he was created mad, and in that madness he blossoms beyond the sanity of evolutional things.

The Ink-Hole

by Roger Wolcott

For J.H., the beetle and goose man
(to be read aloud by Stefan Splory or one of his friends)

In the ink-hole are these: Is Mr. Capers. Is Mrs. Capers who is no relation. Is Johnny. Is Ungutha. Also there is or is remembered a canary being formerly the property of Mrs. Capers and being formerly in a cage. But no caging is allowed in the ink-hole and the canary is uncaged now, now flown now god knows where.

Swimming in the ink-hole are tiny tiny whales, swimming, looking like sperms says Mrs. Capers especially in the time when she was of a definite design regarding Mr. Capers, regarding catching at Mr. Capers' attention. Every day is whale soup and is made by Mrs. Capers. Every day is afterwards whale steak with sauce. And the sauce is ink, yes, everything is ink, yes, but of a different color: is pink ink.

Ugh says Mrs. Capers, pink ink makes me *think*.

Of what, whistles Ungutha, whistles over the top of her spoon, of what.

Of the time when. And Mrs. Capers is reaching back again, back into the time before this time, is reaching greedily and Ungutha the revolutionary comes often comes close so close to whatever must come if Mrs. Capers keeps on and on like that.

Are a sour bunch, making an exception like a bite out of a rhubarb pie without sugar is an exception, an exception for Mrs. Capers. Who has other faults, yes, but not the sour fault. Now for the others: Is Johnny is a writer and is always putting things into English and nobody, nobody likes to hear their English put into English. Then is Mr. Capers who is holding meetings perhaps in this very moment and is diseased says Johnny yes diseased with a complex and this is Johnny's way of saying into English that Mr. Capers is a bore. Then is Ungutha the revolutionary is screaming and is screaming about Women's Rights at that. And a little later is screaming about Bourgeois Ethics which is not what you think it is for Ungutha if you think it is anything for anybody. Mr. Capers will object and will say women have got all the rights they want. Then Ungutha will tense herself and her baseball biceps and will answer, women will never never have all the rights they want. Then Mrs. Capers who is never sour will simper: that's right dear and a good thing it is too.

On occasions they do not understand Ungutha at all at all at all.

Ungutha is belligerent then and throws ink whole fistfulls of ink. Ink-throwing is elsewhere whatever it is, but ink-throwing is in an ink-hole a harmless thing and in an ink-hole is a futile thing. Nobody minds.

Of activity in the ink-hole happens very little and happens the same as it happens before. Of talking, but of talking there is much, and is talking mostly between two people talking at one time. The conversations have come in clots and the first clot is between Mrs. Capers and Johnny. Johnny even now is talking very little and very sour. But Mrs. Capers from the very first is talking very much. And Mrs. Capers must have credit for what she does from the very first and how can she get credit if we don't stop the story. Mrs. Capers one

Is discoverer of recipes for little whales. Mrs. Capers two

Is generously loaning at this very moment her own net stockings for how can you catch a little whale without a net. But she is only loaning them, yes Mr. Capers, I'm only loaning them for I may need them in another time. But oh what a thing it is when a little fat whale noses into one of those floating traps and down he goes to the very toe and there is greatly hissing and is shooting up an angry fountain of vaporized ink and oh what a comfortable feeling that is, to know to hear your dinner waiting there in the foot of Mrs. Capers' stocking! Oh!

Now is start the story again is to get back to Mrs. Capers and Johnny is to say she was very persistent with Johnny and to say he was very rude with her. She is talking naturally talking about his writing and she has never seen him writing but it is natural to talk of it. Where am I going to find a public, Johnny says, and he is blowing his nose on everyone as he says that. Who's going to be my public, he says, you, or you, or you?

But we're the only Public you've got, says Mrs. Capers, honey, says Mrs. Capers. Johnny is sad now and Mrs. Capers says a bright thing then, well anyway, she says, you've got plenty of ink to write with!

He says I use an electrical typewriter or tries to say that through his sob but what he says is not what he tries, is: erectrical typewiper.

A typewriter says Mrs. Capers you don't have one here.

I'm not writing here.

What are you doing here.

I don't know here. Collecting material here.

Collecting me here asks Mrs. Capers, honey, asks Mrs. Capers.

You're, says Johnny, uncollectable. Is disgusted and sideways moves into a shadow.

He's shy thinks Mrs. Capers and Mrs. Capers thinks generally that what is is what could be. He's shy and Mrs. Capers gets back her net stockings when Mr. Capers' back is turned. By this time they are shrunk a little and Mrs. Capers squeezes a little to get back into the net stockings or perhaps yes perhaps she is fatter now for whale soup and whale-steak are most fattening. It is after dinner now and she moves manoeuvres manipulates a netted thigh close to his. But nothing, and even says to her something so peculiar something about women in general that Mrs. Capers is thinking something so peculiar about Johnny. No perhaps she is thinking wrong for one day Johnny is speaking and is speaking mistily about Beatrice and Beatrice is beautiful and Beatrice is living now and was living then when he met her in a place called Paradiso. But doesn't sound like a real place says Mrs. Capers.

Is realer than this place says Johnny.

This place is real as real as anything, says Mrs. Capers. But she never gets out the stockings for Johnny the writer again. And she begins to remember what they always said about writers that writers were peculiar and were sometimes so peculiar.

And now is the time when Mrs. Capers is plunging after Mr. Capers.

Of activity in the ink-hole happens still very little and still the whales are straining against the stockings and still conversations are in clots. Of course when Mrs. Capers says Ungutha won't you cook with me, Ungutha says something about Women's Rights screams something about Women's Rights but nobody minds now nobody listens. The revolution is later.

The revolution is the day Mrs. Capers is refusing to come to the meeting and Mr. Capers is always calling meetings, meeting like people on a desert-island in a film, like meetings in many films of desperate people. To refuse to come to a meeting in an ink-hole is to do a very difficult thing and is to be done only symbolically. So Mrs. Capers does it symbolically does it by turning her ass her ample ass on the other three.

Mr. Capers speaks firmly to Mrs. Capers' ample back and is saying swing round this instant. No answer in the ink-hole, so he uses his right foot neatly not too powerfully on Mrs. Capers'

ample buttock the right buttock. Then yes then Mrs. Capers turns and Mrs. Capers bellows who the hell do you think you are, who elected you chief kicker-in-the-ass?

Yes, echoes Ungutha, by what right, and now Ungutha is jumping up.

Power erupts, Johnny is interjecting, and absolute power erupts absolutely, interjects is bored is merely hoping for distraction.

Revolution! shouts Ungutha, equal rights for all and no rights for you Mr. Capers and on and on about Women's Rights and so on but nothing about the Bourgeois Ethic. Not yet.

Mr. Capers is surely trembling and is squeaking. Vote, he is squeaking, vote then we shall see.

So they vote and Johnny and Ungutha and Mr. Capers vote for themselves. But Mrs. Capers loves dictators somewhere in her heart and her vote is for Mr. Capers. This is the revolution and this is all the revolution there ever was and the meetings are continuing perhaps at this very moment.

Her vote is for Mr. Capers and now her heart is for Mr. Capers and Mr. Capers knows or at least he knows about the vote. He does not repell Mrs. Capers and he does not encourage Mrs. Capers no he does not repell Mrs. Capers until she puts on her net stockings and forgets, cries Mr. Capers, the community good. You're selfish he says, you disgust me.

How I wish I could sighs Mrs. Capers, and she puts a whale bone tenderly behind his ear and knows it is no good.

Of activity in the ink-hole happens still very little and this is even counting the revolution. Until the Bourgeois Ethic.

Well first there is a yell and is not Ungutha, not Johnny, not Mr. Capers, not Mrs. Capers. Then there is a scream and is Ungutha and is not about Women's Rights this time is about shame. And the yell says what you got in there anyway and the scream says get your goddamned get your Bourgeois Ethic out of there. And the yell says again what the hell you got in there ow ow ow. And Ungutha says a canary it flew in there the very first day and I left it there.

Now is known that someone else is in the ink-hole and they cannot see him and they look and they see white is eyes and they see pink is open mouth but they cannot see him. Are afraid.

But fearing and fearing and fearing what they cannot see is boring. Then Ungutha says is a Negro she thinks is a Negro and they say of course a Negro and we are four and he is one.

But Johnny is following the white eyes and the pink mouth and when they lie down Johnny lies down and it is hard to say what Johnny is wanting at first but now is easy to say. Johnny is putting his hand on the Negro and is easy to say. And the Negro is putting his hand on Johnny and is easy to say. And for several days is easy to say. Johnny is collecting material.

Then the Negro is putting his hand on Mrs. Capers and then Johnny is sad is restless. And with Mrs. Capers and the Negro it is a long time of wanting and having and everyone else knows and everyone else is sad is restless.

But now the Negro is not putting his hand on Mrs. Capers and is not putting his hand on anyone and all are sad are restless and it is not the same as before.

The ink-hole is bad for my skin says Mrs. Capers I want to go.

A meeting says Mr. Capers and they have a meeting.

How do we go, the way we came, how did we come: this is what is said at the meeting.

How did we come Ungutha. I don't know.

How did we come Johnny. I don't know.

How did we come Mrs. Capers. I don't know we just came.

And I don't know says Mr. Capers and they are silent.

The reason says Ungutha.

No one asked for a reason says Mr. Capers.

The reason says Ungutha is we are being brain-washed.

I will put into English what you are saying Ungutha and I say we are in Purgatorio says Johnny.

Oh Johnny says Mrs. Capers why don't you put it into English if you say you're going to put it into English and say we are in Purgatory.

Purgatorio says Johnny is a different place.

Where is the Negro asks Mr. Capers. And perhaps he is here and perhaps he is sleeping with his white eyes closed and with his pink mouth closed and they cannot see him perhaps. Where is the Negro, Mrs. Capers.

It is hard to say sighs Mrs. Capers but he is here for sure.

Negro cries Mr. Capers tell us the way out. Tell us says Johnny says Ungutha says Mrs. Capers. Tell us.

And then they see the white eyes and the pink open mouth and they see them moving and moving in circles and up and down and across. He is dancing says Mrs. Capers so they wait. And there is no sound in the ink-hole only the hissing of little whales in Mrs.

Capers' stockings and the panting of the Negro. When he stops they say again very politely very softly very sadly: tell us.

And the pink mouth makes a smile in the ink-hole and the Negro says who wants to leave the ink-hole anyway! Then he laughs and laughs and all you can hear in the ink-hole is his laughing and all you can see is his open pink mouth.

A Snowman at the Kitchen Door

by Reuel Denney

In spring, when the powerful ask what they ought to be
And the powerless cannot think of what to say,
The snowman weeps with candle-drop vexation.
In spring, when the movers ask no reason why
And some are born when just about to die,
The snowman holds on sideways, with a sigh.

Fair flesh of love, on which much pain is worked,
And loyal without thought of loyalty,
It was after the thunder was ripe in the north of autumn,
Exploding from airy pods its fractured lightning
And after the footfall deadweight of full summer
Later and later was reaching the oaks of its home,
And love, it was in the time when roads are grey,
And when lurched leaves come to a windstop place to thicken,
And animals that sleep and sleep to change
From senseless skins and patterns, leave life lying
In belts of snakes in woods and scrolls of wasps,
And when dreamers swim from shells and call them home
Only after the secret rent is gone,
That the snowman came to the time he had to be born.

You, snowman, with your handle short a shovel,
You are a physicist with a fiddle in the moonlight
Steeped in the neon of a shiftless suburb
And a worker with a crick in your back
From staying up too late at night
And studying in an almanac.

If the criticism of sculpture could be concluded by curators
Then the snowman's nude would never be news.

See how some salvage from a space of dreaming
In testament to worlds of spring
Can care so little in the warming April
For what we call the principle of the thing.
He leans upon that shovel debonair
As if the work were neither here nor there,
Whereas we know that it is everywhere,
He keeps his eyes of coal for gleams of char
And holds his hat of jet with frozen ear,
A sugar juggler.
He rests upon his shovel in the sun.

Morning with mist, the snowman moves, we imagine,
Our deliquescent kin, yet changeless,
Morph of immortals,
A model man beyond all fashions fair
Because no matter whichever way the wind blows,
He parts his hair the way we part our hair.

What sweat the snowman pours when with the heat
Of the unrefusable weather on his crown
He bows to the blue persuasions of the spring.
At nights those melts will freeze again to gleaming,
As if that thaw were honors of the sun.

What is appearance, really?
Merely the foreman of some team of seemers?
One evening green with so much light that it magnetized our hair
The snowman and an inching rabbit
Asked this across their mortgaged air,
On a winter night that brought them face to face.
Their distance harbored all of space.

What every train can see that passes by
In lands of a steely sky and frosted eave
Is this blue doll that twilight hates to leave
And ghost at night when a watchman moon comes walking
Over the snowy yard with his rusty lantern
– And that we judged him to a crooked eye.

The one who was there went away from us over-night,
Lapsing with winter, and he went southwest
By weathers made for wings, and now he mingles
In patterns of a current in a coral,
And all the rites of rusty bricks and wires
And the forked men of gutter deltas
Are careless about the matter with their prayers.

O love, of this the grackles speak to me,
And sing him all day Sunday to the sea.

Drawing by Mark Clark

A Game of Catch

by George Garrett

On the way to the beach the two brothers began to argue. Naomi sat between them in the front seat of the convertible, Tee Jay's car, and ate candy bars. Naomi didn't drink or smoke, but when she was away from it all on a day like this, going to the beach without a worry in the world, she would stuff candy. Sometimes she ate so much she got sick. Tee Jay knew all about it. He was the one who brought a whole box of Baby Ruth's along for the trip. Courtney, the crazy one, brought her a flower. When they tooted the horn for her in the alley behind the gymnasium and she came running out of the back door smiling at them, it was Tee Jay who handed her a box of Baby Ruth's. He knew about her sweet tooth. Courtney got out of the car to let her in and gave her the gardenia, one fifty-cent gardenia.

'What's this for?' Naomi said. 'Are we going to a dance or something?'

'I don't know,' Courtney said to Tee Jay. 'Are we?'

Tee Jay ignored him. He kept staring into Naomi's eyes, half-smiling, until she looked down at her flat shoes.

'Don't look at me,' Tee Jay said. 'It's *his* idea.'

'I'll tell you what,' Courtney said. 'Why don't you eat it? For dessert, after you finish the candy, I mean.'

Naomi laughed and clapped him on the back, hearty, comradely. What else could she do? That Courtney was something, you never knew what he might think of next. You never knew how to take anything he said. Besides, he was just out of the State Asylum. He had been in and out a couple of times. They said he was cured now, but you wouldn't know it. You couldn't be sure about a thing like that.

They drove along the highway to the east coast, and the brothers were arguing as usual. Naomi chewed candy and let the warm air trouble her hair. It was dark and cut close, but with the breeze fingering it, combing it, she imagined it was long and blowing in a dark cloud like smoke behind her, long and mysterious as Lady Godiva's. Floating on her skirt between the firm bulge of her thighs, the gardenia was already turning brown at the edges, but it was sweet.

'I don't care where you read it,' Tee Jay was saying. 'It sounds like crap to me.'

'I'm telling you that something like that, a murder, is just love in disguise. He might have just kissed them. It would be the same thing.'

'Books! Books! That's all I get from you. Do you believe everything you read in a book?'

'He's got a thing about books, you know,' Courtney said to Naomi. 'Do you know the only book Tee Jay ever read? I mean *read*, all the way, every word from the beginning to the end.'

'Don't try and involve me in the discussion,' Naomi said, her mouth rich with chocolate.

She had been listening vaguely to their words, but it was all so morbid. They were arguing about some old man who had gathered his whole family together for a photograph, sat them down in a tight group on his front steps, his wife, his grown children, even his grandchildren. When he had them all ready and posed for the picture, he excused himself for just one moment and went back in the house. He returned with a shotgun, and before any of them could even move, he fired both barrels into them point blank. He was reloading the gun to shoot himself when the next door neighbor came running over and knocked him out with a shovel. The papers were full of it. They were always full of things like that. And Naomi couldn't care less. Trust old Courtney to bring up the subject. Trust him, too, to try and get her in the argument.

'I'll tell you the only book Tee Jay ever read all the way through. It was called *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*.'

'So what,' Tee Jay said. 'It wasn't a bad book.'

'How would *you* know? What have you got to compare it with?'

'Look,' Tee Jay said. 'You're the one with the college education. I'm the one that went to work. I don't have time to read a lot of books. All I do is pay for the books you read.'

'It doesn't take a lot of time to read a book,' Courtney said.

'It takes too much time for me.'

Naomi licked the candy off her fingers and reached forward and turned on the radio. When it warmed up, she twisted the dial until she found some music playing, then she turned it up as loud as it would go. It roared over and around them like a storm, scattering music to the four winds. She saw their mouths still moving furiously, but *they* couldn't hear each other if *she* couldn't, sitting between them. Courtney leaned close and whispered in her ear.

'Flaming Youth,' he said.

'What?' she mouthed.

'Flaming Youth,' he whispered again. 'It's a sort of a joke.'

Then he stuck out his wet tongue and fluttered it in her ear, and she jerked away from him. If it had been anyone else in the

world but poor Courtney, she would have slapped his fresh face. Tee Jay, who was turning down the radio, missed the whole thing.

'Reach in the glove compartment,' he said. 'Hand me my cigarettes.'

'I'd prefer if you didn't smoke,' Naomi said. 'You know how I feel about it.'

'Who cares how you feel?' Tee Jay snapped at her, taking the pack from Courtney. 'Maybe *I* don't like candy. Maybe it makes me sick to watch people who eat candy. I don't have the right to object, do I?'

'Candy is altogether different,' Naomi said. 'If God had intended for you to smoke, He would have made you a chimney.'

'Yeah? Yeah?' Tee Jay said, lighting his cigarette. 'Maybe you'd like to walk to the beach. If God had intended for you to ride, He would have put wheels on your ass.'

Naomi glared straight ahead.

'It makes me sad to be the only one who isn't indulging in something, some lonely, stupid, solitary, ineffable private vice.'

And with that curious remark Courtney simply put his hand in her lap and took the gardenia. He held it under his nose, sniffed it, and then began to chew the white bitter petals.

'Don't *swallow* it!' Naomi cried. 'What's the matter, are you crazy?'

She blushed then, realizing that it had just slipped out like that.

'Oh, no,' Courtney said, his mouth white and full of flower. 'I *used* to be, but I'm not any more. I'm just as sane as everyone.'

Inexplicably, Tee Jay laughed.

'How does it taste, boy?' he said.

'Not too bad,' Courtney said. 'On the other hand, don't feel that you're missing out on anything.'

'You better be careful,' Naomi said. 'I've heard tell they're poison.'

'You'll never know for sure until somebody tries one,' Courtney said. 'That's science for you.'

After that they rode without talking, just listening to the music on the radio. Naomi felt a lot better now that they had stopped arguing. The only trouble was still Courtney. He kept putting his hand on her leg. That would be all right, just resting there, but he wouldn't leave well enough alone. After a while, all of a sudden, he'd stiffen all his fingers at once and start edging up her thigh like a spider, sort of on tiptoes or tipfingers. When his hand got too

close for comfort, sneaking toward the ultimate destination which Naomi, in spite of all, to her dying day, would call her privates, plural, she would have to firmly take his hand in hers and remove it. Then the whole process would begin all over again. Courtney kept looking straight up the road, and so did she. She didn't want to make a scene, and she knew if Tee Jay noticed anything, he'd stop the car and beat Courtney up.

When they got to the beach it seemed like a perfect day. The sun was bright, the water was blue and scaled with the whitecaps of a brisk east wind. The tide was down, but rising, so they could still drive up and down the beach in Tee Jay's goodlooking car. Far out along the horizon clouds like dark bruises were massing and swelling, but they were a long way away. They drove up and down the beach a few times, slowly, just looking at the people, the children running and jumping and splashing and throwing sand, as shrill and swift as gulls, the muscular young men, bronzed and cocky, the girls in their bright bathing suits, and, too, the old people, the fat and the thin, misshapen and grotesque, sprawled under beach umbrellas, or burning lurid shades of pink in the sun. The men with mountainous stomachs and the little jiggly breasts like girls at puberty, and bandy, veined legs, and the women, thin and wrinkled as old, cracked leather, or enormous, all rippling, shaking bellies and buttocks, and great breasts sagging like overripe fruit, disgusted Naomi. She could not stand to look at them. *They* had a nerve, exposing themselves like that! Still, she was irresistibly fascinated; she couldn't help studying them and wondering, with an inner chill as if her blood had turned to quicksilver, if she would ever be like that.

After they had driven up and down a while, Tee Jay turned south and drove past the last of the cottages, clinging precariously to the dunes like driftwood on the swelling sea, past the last of the swimmers, the last lifeguard, dozing and golden on his stilted perch, to the open beach.

'Where are we going now?' Naomi asked.

'Swimming,' Tee Jay said.

'Well,' she said, 'I'd like to go to the Bath House and put on my bathing suit.'

'The Bath House? Christ, what *for*?'

'Turn the car around, please,' she said.

'That's the craziest thing I ever heard of,' Tee Jay said. 'The

Bath House costs fifty cents apiece. We can dress in the dunes for free.'

'I'd *prefer* to dress in the Bath House.'

'What's the *matter* with you? Courtney won't mind.'

'Can't you see the girl is moved by natural modesty?' Courtney said. 'Take her to the Bath House.'

'Natural modesty, my ass! Fifty cents is a whole lot of money to fork over all of a sudden just because for the first time in her life Naomi decides she's modest.'

'Women are that way,' Courtney said. 'Full of little surprises.'

He only said that, Naomi knew, because of the way his own wife had done him. After three years of married life and two children, she simply left one day, drove off with Billy Towne who was a salesman of fishing tackle up and down both coasts, from Fernandina to Coral Gables, from Pensacola to Key West. Yes, Billy Towne could take Maxine all over the whole state. She could go to the beaches while he was working, and at night they could go to all the bars and nightclubs. It was a good life for her. The thing was how hard it hit Courtney. He worshipped Maxine, like a fool, because anybody could have told him how she was born a bitch and would die a bitch, no matter how pretty she was. So, away went Maxine, *with* the two little girls, living in open unashamed sin with that Billy Towne. And *poof*, Courtney was in the State Asylum. Then *she* could divorce him because he was legally crazy. Oh yes, he would make all of those nasty cracks about women in general, but the world knew that if Maxine crooked her little finger at him, he'd go back to her on his hands and knees. Tee Jay, of course, had never married anybody. He hadn't even mentioned marriage in all this time. Still, there was always the chance that he would.

'I'm sorry,' Naomi said, 'but I really would rather dress at the Bath House. I'll pay for it myself.'

'In *that* case . . . ,' Tee Jay said.

And he turned the car around in a wild, wide, sand-scattering circle and sped back toward the main beach. He hunched over the wheel, close to the windshield like a racing driver, and put the gas pedal to the floor. That was Tee Jay for you!

Once inside the small unpainted cubicle in the Bath House, standing on the wet, strutted slats, Naomi undressed and hung her clothes on a nail. She was a tall ungainly girl. Her face, though

cast in large, coarse features, had a uniformity that made her seem conventionally pretty. But her body was oddly proportioned. Her thick, heavy-muscled legs, her hard high large buttocks and flat stomach, seemed to belong to someone much larger, perhaps even, except for the curve of her hips, to a powerful man. ('My full-back,' Tee Jay called her.) Her upper body was slight and frail-boned, flatchested like a young girl's. In her clothes, wearing full skirts, loose peasant blouses, and flat shoes, she achieved a kind of equilibrium, but at moments like this, alone and naked, she felt a shame and self-revulsion that nearly brought her to tears. She struggled into her black, one-piece suit, too tight at the hips, padded at the breasts, put on her white bathing cap, and placed the elastic-banded key around her wrist. She pulled the door of the cubicle to, sharply, behind her.

The two of them were waiting for her in the car. They turned their heads together and stared at her as she came across the board-walk and down the wooden steps and across the powdery sand near the dunes. She began running toward them.

'Look,' Courtney cried, 'a female Centaur. Whatever that may be.'

'Let's get the show on the road,' Tee Jay said.

Then, still staring at her as she got into the car Courtney said, 'Cough drops.'

When Tee Jay found a place that suited him, out of sight of the main beach, the two of them took their swimming trunks and went up into the dunes to change. Naomi spread out a beach blanket and covered her exposed skin with suntan oil. She had a little plaid beach basket from which she took a pair of dark glasses and a confession magazine. Just then, settling comfortably in the sun-light, she heard the thunder and felt the breeze coming stronger and cooler off the ocean, saw lightning far off in the clouds and whitecaps flickering across the whole expanse of the visible sea.

'It's going to squall,' she called.

'So what?' Tee Jay replied from the dunes.

And she looked and saw the two of them, the twins, standing side by side on top of a dune, perfectly identical except that Courtney was pale and soft beside Tee Jay. They came charging down in a little whirlwind of sand and legs, leapt right over her and past with flashing heels and flanks, raced into the water. Soon they were splashing each other and shouting, but she couldn't hear what they were saying to each other. She went back to the car and got the

box of Baby Ruth's. She returned and, opening her magazine, began to read the sad thrilling tale of an innocent girl who was seduced by a State Policeman.

By the time the two came back from their swim, they were arguing again, and about the same old thing. Tee Jay opened the glove compartment and produced a pint of whiskey. They both had a drink. A lot they cared about her approval! Then Tee Jay went around and opened the trunk. He fumbled around until he found a softball and two gloves. It was a brand new softball, white, hard and shiny.

'You want to play catch?'

'No,' she said. 'I don't feel much like it right now.'

'*Well*, how do you like that?'

'I'll throw a few with you,' Courtney said.

They moved out in front of the car and began to lob the ball easily back and forth. Tee Jay was the athlete. He played third base for Morrison's Department Store Softball Team. Naomi loved to go and watch him play on a spring or summer evening under the lights, in his red and green and gold uniform. He was so quick, so deft, so dandy around the bag. He was the only man she had ever seen, except in newsreels and such, that she could really *admire* when he was playing a game. The others, even the good ones, were so sloppy and careless, like they didn't care, like it was so easy for them, running and throwing and just being men, like they didn't give two hoots what anybody thought. She hated them. Tee Jay was nervous and quick and delicate; every move he made seemed to have its reason. Naomi's heart leapt for him when she saw him move swiftly to snag a hardhit ball, or when he came running full speed, but like a dancer on points, to scoop up a bunt, whirl, and in the same motion burn it down to second or to first base. Courtney, on the other hand, had never been much at sports. That was a funny thing. The first time he was at the State Asylum he got the notion somehow that he was going to play shortstop for the New York Yankees. It was terrible. Tee Jay would have to drive up there and spend whole weekends batting him flies and grounders, and playing catch with him. At least, Naomi noticed, he had improved from the practice. She returned to her magazine story.

The storm moved in on them. Drops of rain began to fall, and, looking up, Naomi saw that the black clouds were overhead and all around them. They seemed to be shaggy and running like

buffaloes in the movies. The waves were much bigger now and broke on the sand with huge crashes and bursts of foam like breaking glass. She bundled her things together and ran to the car. She pulled the lever that controlled the mechanism, and the gray top began to creak forward into place.

'Who told you to do that?' Tee Jay yelled at her.

He ran over, his face pinched and flushed with anger, and let the top down again. The rain was falling harder now, in thick drops. The trouble was that they had started the argument again.

'Cut off your nose to spite your face,' she said. But a lance of lightning and a barrage of thunder drowned out her voice.

'What was that? What did you say?'

'Never mind,' she replied.

She crouched in the front seat and the cold rain fell on her. The two of them, heedless of rain, thunder and lightning, stood there shouting at each other and throwing the ball as hard as they could. They had thrown their gloves aside. They shouted and threw the ball so hard she didn't see how they could catch it barehanded. It was very dangerous for all of them, she knew. She'd heard stories about people being struck by lightning on the beach. Besides the tide was rising; pretty soon they wouldn't be able to drive back along the beach. She got out of the car and ran to Tee Jay.

'Let's go,' she said. 'Let's go home.'

Tee Jay threw the ball to Courtney. He threw it gently.

'Let's quit,' Tee Jay said. 'This is crazy.'

'Are you *afraid*?' Courtney yelled.

The full strength of the squall was on them now. With the rain pelting, the high wind and the lightning and thunder, they had to scream to each other. Courtney fired the ball back to Tee Jay and he threw it back just as hard. Naomi could see the red round shape of the ball printed on Tee Jay's palm and fingers.

'*You* catch it,' Courtney screamed at her. 'You're the coach.'

She caught it and threw it to Tee Jay. Then it was a three-cornered game. For a few minutes she was glad to be shielding Tee Jay, catching that wet, hot, skin-wincing ball and throwing it, easy, to him. But it hurt and Tee Jay seemed impatient to throw again. He didn't seem to appreciate what she was doing at all. So she threw it to him as hard as she could.

'Damn you!' he said.

Her hands were bruised and aching, and she was afraid of the thunder and lightning, but still they kept throwing the ball so fast

that she didn't know what to do. Finally Courtney dropped one and it rolled away down the beach. He chased after it, and she was running behind him. When he seized it and spun around, wild-eyed, to throw it to her, she was close enough to kiss him if she had wanted to. Surprised, he began back. The tears started streaming from her eyes.

'Please, please, let's stop now and go home.'

'No,' he said. 'No, we aren't going to stop.'

'Please,' she said. 'Please.'

He squeezed the ball in both hands.

'All right,' he said. 'I'll tell you what. You take off your bathing suit, and we'll go home.'

'Throw the godamn ball!' Tee Jay yelled.

Courtney waved at him to wait a minute. Tee Jay stamped his feet angrily, but waited.

'Go on, take it off,' Courtney said to her.

'Will we go home then?'

He nodded.

She undid her shoulder straps and slipped and wriggled out of the rain-soaked suit. It lay like a small shadow at her feet.

'Now dance.'

'What?'

'When I brought you the flower, you made a joke about going to a dance. Well, this is it. Dance for me.'

Clumsily, cold, shivering in the wind, and still crying, she began to dance. Courtney laughed at her. He reached out and touched her small, brown, shrunk nipples with his fingers.

'See what I meant about cough drops?' he said. Then he cupped his hands and yelled into the wind to Tee Jay. 'See what I mean? See what I mean about love? I *love* her.'

'Never mind all that crap,' Tee Jay replied. 'Just keep throwing the godamn ball and we'll see who's afraid around here.'

Naomi knelt down then, beside her bathing suit, and hid her face. She huddled on herself like a child asleep, and the two men continued to throw the ball back and forth with unrelenting fury.

Drawing by Mark Clark

Poems by Ewart Milne

THE PRISONER

Beneath the iron regime
beneath the buildings
beneath the faceless stone
beneath the bars the wired compounds
in the long tombs in the deep cells
out of sight out of sound
of life of all
but the franconian guards
a ghostly knocking begins
a hand thrusts upward
a whispering sigh
a piece of paper a poem
flutters stealthily and is gone

They'll ask:
what is there human in this?
They'll ask: from whence come?
(I know, I'll be with them)
but tell them short and sweet
to read, read and learn:
Say to them, look, he begins well,
says what he has to say
writes of the prisonwalls and his cell
dead and living dead
himself and his neighbours
as the light filters through the bars dawn early

Good isn't it?
Should be published
A masterpiece
Should be translated
sure, into a thousand tongues!
Knock 'em cold
(I know, I'm with you there)
publish it at once: pronto
we'll do that
bestseller of the century
that's what we've got

And they took what he wrote and published it
and it sold
then they came and looked at him in his cell
(I know, I was there)
said he showed great promise
for a corpse
named the worm names that had eaten him
name after name of worm
pointed to the likeliest direction he would take
once he got out
and departed unasked as they came
(I know, I was there, I was stuck with him)

Candidate for fame, eh?
for money and fame?
so that's what he was up to?
strange it hadn't seemed like that
you know?
when first we looked into his so-called testament –
so hard to smuggle it out, too,
remember?
well no it hadn't seemed like that
but of course writing is a trade
and there are tricks to it

O but dead and living dead
are not tricks
light floweringbars prisonwalls cells
not tricks
him and his neighbours his brothers of the long tombs
leftovers of civil wars of lost causes of sad dreams
not tricks
not, anyway, before the little men came
the critics and reviewers came
praised him and pinned him
panned him and breathanalysed him
(I know, I was there, stuck with him)
praised him and denounced him and departed
unasked as they came
so then what was he to do?
how now could he hide hide or run?

or even, curse the day he had been born?
for, had he?
why why had he sent out that bit of paper that scabrous poem?

A coming man?
yes, certainly, he's got it in him.
And his sentence still to run?
Remarkable! What was he in for?
What did he get? Death?
Oh death. That's all?
When? After ninety nine years in all?
Or on a morning deferred?
He'll get off now I shouldn't wonder!
What get off Death? On a deferred morning?
How can you be so macabre! Joke over.
He'll be famous, never fear.
And dead of course. But of course, dead.

FOREVER ANSO

Anso, cheesed
with his old wife
demanded
a change of scenery;
a dish he could ditch
if and when necessary.
A gish, a bint, a dame, a doll,
a chick (teenage)
a mot (Dublinese)
a daughter of Flanders, Moll.
For the proper exercise of the lyrical
genius, a change of scenery was vital.
Easy, no problem at all.

Alas, what Anso actually got
was always, somehow, different.
He got a bony poetess,
a welfare state matron,
an air hostess (never earthbound)

a teenage virgin (willin' nothin')
a Judo girl all too expert
a sharpshooting female from Detroit
(she shot from the hips)
a cat on half-bricks,
a ditto on stiletto heels,
all of whom
in another Age perhaps
with world and time to spare
might have paid off handsomely;
but who, for variegated reasons,
in this day of performing cops
and conforming cuties,
were a dead loss.

Pack it in, Anso!
seek no more the golden rhyme,
storm no more the Temple beaches,
from Parnass hill come limping down,
leave the lot to pimps and homos;
though the task has not been done –
at least not so's will please your teachers –
seek an island in the sun
no form of transport ever reaches;
take the old wife too along –
that's if she can stand your grouches –
but best of all get there alone
sans more than Shakespeare ever mentions.
Pack it in, Anso. Bollox the lot.

A sensible solution, yes?
But tell it to Anso! Sensible,
sure, but just tell it to him!
Anso? Huh, him go piddling along
following his old reefer dream
of THE MOST GIRL! exotic, layabout,
striptease, cash down and carry,
perpetual motion, change of scene –
give him this and he'd be happy then,
apolitical, asocial, all-in-lyrical,
Anso forever, amen amen.

Two Lovers on the Train

by Nancy Sullivan

Into the compartment of their sunny train
Two others, jouncing like strung monkeys, came
To lunch on pears and to watch with eager shame
Love darting eyeward and armward in mute refrain
Between two lovers, who had hoped to own
This square of whizzing world and cube of space
From Paris to Marseilles for their sweeter race
Of blood and flowering flesh and love alone.

But unalone, kissing the corners of their words,
They talked on talk, and fitfully resigned
Watched the stretched out world unwind
Until restraint bound them in its dim rewards.
The lovers, in sleep, fell away as rails
Do when one discovers their parallel infinity.
So lovers' finite arms uncoil in love's brevity
As sleep comes full round when passion fails,
And ties each separate with a eunuch's cords.

Now the squares, the squares and angles kiss:
Knees and elbows on this cutlass bench
Boxed up in love's paradox of French
Railroad, schedule, caress – to sleep in this
Skeleton of selves, each incredibly alone
As if they'd never once by fingertips,
Thigh on thigh, or lace of fevered lips
Whispered the truths they here disown
Coupled in docile sleep at a child's tryst.

Hi George!

by Ruth Yorck

I know him well for several reasons. First because he is a second cousin, and third because we have the same armourer. I am telling his story because his name is legend. Not that I mind the many new born babies being called George, but I do object to everybody interpreting the underlying motive for his actions. That disturbs me.

Shortly after George's return, our poet lad, who comes from the Abruzzi, and therefore has a natural talent for tale-telling, was ordered to construct the ballad. But for him to sing means to praise, and his rhymes never reason with the facts. That is why I took him off the project and announced I would take over personally to everybody's satisfaction. Our duke smiled.

George has always confided in me. He used to hook his arm in the silvery chain sleeve onto my shoulder and cry into my curls and curly helmet feathers. I shared his sorrow. We also shared a dog by the name of Youngeaglejoy but he did not come along.

The strange adventure happened on George's last trip. No longer was it actually necessary for any of us to leave home and court and endure the hardship of traveling abroad in search of a fight. Enough styles of heroism and heraldry were known to our troubadors, even at the smaller courts, so no knight would have to become personally involved in any factual experience. He could safely stay where he was, and the singer did a very good job by drawing on legend, tradition and antiquity. He would change a story to fit our particular status, he would repeat a tale often told, and alter it to make the listeners believe it was a new story. The Arabian horse would become a half-blooded steed, and the hero would fight a contemporary person of great repute instead of a demi-god. However this well established procedure did not seem good enough for George. No. He had to do it himself.

He arrived at this village, where the peasants were in despair. They hastened to tell him about their plight. No one was around to defend them as the castle on the hill stood untenanted. And they were frightened by a mighty beast, one-headed only, but still monstrous. What with the scarcity of virgins in the region and other discomforts, they felt this was an unbearable state of affairs. Seeing that the knight was in shining armour, they politely asked would he please be generous and kind and save them from a fate worse than death. Naturally George rode to kill the dragon. But cross! What has been made of that? There is even talk of sainthood, as if it were not enough for a man to be a knight.

I personally do not think that a man deserved to be called a saint because he delivered others from evil. Only a man who has saved himself from temptation rates sainthood. Of course by that reasoning George may very well make the grade, but the saint makers do not know about that. Because when George saw the dragon, he was not afraid at all, not of the beast that is. What he

feared and really dreaded was to deprive the world of this prize. He wished with all his might, wished George, to keep the beast at least a little while longer with us here on earth. He felt a powerful urge to study the dragon, be with him, find out if he had webs between the claws, if the wings were fashioned after the manner of butterfly wings, and would they dust his touching probing finger. And also George wanted to know how long it would take the beast, after drinking a drink of water, to exhale flame again.

That means George took an interest which was much stronger than the hatred nature has a right to expect in such a case. I am sorry to have to say here and now, George fell in love with the dragon. Love at first sight.

He told me about the maiden later, and how dishevelled she was and sloppy and unkempt and moist. How torn her gown, how outmoded the wimpel at her bonnet, how indelicate her exposed skin, quite visible through the rents of her undergarments. She shrieked and moaned and carried on to such a degree it was barely possible to listen to the mellow snorting of the monster.

Even after having noticed him, said George, the virgin continued to shriek shrilly and he had the impression she was not certain whom to fear more, the four-legged or the crouching animal. Only when he lifted his spear did she swallow her breath and the noise that had been carried out on it, settled down heavily in her chains and prepared to watch the spectacle. And, said George, he would just as lief have used his short weapon on her. Dagger for her, he felt; lance for him, the dragon.

George told me how he took in the scene, he spoke about the many emotions he experienced then and there. He had noticed the sun of course, and stood facing the sun as a hero should. He must never take advantage of natural phenomena. George noticed the sun again afterwards when it was over, and the virgin stepped gingerly over the steaming tail-end of the carcass, and the sun meanwhile had not budged an inch. But George said a lot had happened to him between those two moments.

For instance, he thought, he had spent some time putting himself in her place. And also in his, the dragon's, for a spell. To be powerful like a monster, not to care at all about good grooming and outward appearances, to frighten all and sundry by the very stink one exudes, to meet up with human beings only while they are in a state of great excitement, their breathing accelerated, their heartbeat thundering. George looked around for traces of a

dragonette and young ones and wondered if they were taught to walk first or how to fly, or inflict harm, or spit fire. He concluded that his was a solitary dragon with neither consort nor issue, a bachelor.

However, said George, he believes he spent more time imagining he was her, the maiden. At the same time he remained himself, and despised her not a little.

I told him that I understood very well what he meant, and I did indeed. Had not the same thing happened to me on several occasions? I had been involved in a spectacle, and at the same time had been outside, watching. Like at night, when I go to play the game of knights with my fair lady fine, sweetening her up, and also admiring her because she has such an exemplary specimen of manhood at her beck and call, subtly alluding to myself. I may fall on my knees, my hands in dangerous proximity, and, at that very moment adore the enticing formation of my limbs, and this at the same second when the chainknit silver flap is pushed aside and the dagger out of its scabbard, so to speak, and in again.

As to George imagining to be the victim of the dragon, I was disgusted with that part of his story. Rely on George to miss the beauty in an Eastern ruby every time, or in a beaten tumbler, or in a unicorn embroidered on a fine lady's apron. But was it really necessary for him to go so far in an opposite direction? He said I should search myself, and that he was certain I would come up with a few similar sensations. Has anyone ever heard of such a thing – a knight searching, diving deep down into his soul? Good night, Knight! Our life is regulated by certain rules and regulations, and the observance of the laws of knighthood should leave us too exhausted for night vision or self-identification. And other horrors of the spirit.

Well, George said he felt a tingling on the skin of his belly when he observed the beast. And after that a sweet small pain in his lower regions. And he did not, he said, for a moment even, take this tingling for a sign of fear. It was nearer to pleasure, he said.

Not that he found the huge dragon lovely or handsome, no, his very ugliness filled George with ecstasy. To be imprisoned, enchained, endangered, ravished, put upon by the beast, George actually longed for all these horrors abominably so. To share the monster's lair, the stink of decaying flesh burning his nostrils.

George wanted to spread his hands and stroke the folded hairless wings. He wanted to press his thighs onto the horny scales and feel

the five-point scratch of the awful claws upon him. He wanted, said George, to find himself, not above the monster, a victor, but below, nay, underneath the terrible beast, the burden of the beast to lie on George.

He also wished to cry for help, not strident as the virgin shrieked, but in a low baritone, and at the same time know for certain that no one would, or indeed could, come to save him.

George said that never before had he wanted so much at one time, and with such urgency. He wanted the licks of hopelessness flickering over his skin. For someone like George who often before had been spellbound by the strength of capable hands, how much more crushing would be the touch of the claw.

While these different sensations poured over George he felt also a measure of compassion. That happened when the much censored and condemned beast blinked in his direction and George saw how over the dragon's ageless eyes fell slowly, hiding them, the horny lid bereft of lashes. Nor was George able to detect, inside the brushwork of spikes and pointed scales, the armour of the beast, a trace of earlobe to be spoken to. The creature not be spoken to, by anything but loneliness.

George became desperate, he said. Never, he feared, could the object of his compassion and sympathy understand him. The dragon would believe the knight an enemy and fight accordingly, without tenderness. Because, and that I know from my own experience, the bittersweet battle of equals offers many a solace. One man will watch the other's style, the other's poise and courage, the other's grace and swiftness. As the man will later on watch with love and pride the flow of shiny moisture, the blood. And in case of tears, tears would be never, by one or the other, acknowledged.

If there would be smiles, smiled by the conqueror, the victim would return them, smile by smile, and freeze the last one around a sorry mouth, expiring.

Looking thus at the grizzly creature of the dark, said George, his legs were reluctant around the sleek belly of his speedy steed. Well. He gave in to tradition of course. He slew the dragon.

He sank his spear into the red hot softness of the dragon's mouth, struck through the marble boned palate, and felt, shivering, how the creature's gullet fitted the staff.

He also told me, that the leaking carcass smelled like a battlefield of many heroes, and that the fountain of burning blood,

spouting from the maimed mouth, spattered George's face and made him laugh, with something he called hope.

The peasants from the liberated village insisted on giving him the virgin, but George declined with vigor. They praise him now, for having renounced the beast in man.

Naturally George has never confided in anyone but me. Even so, all pictures of the event show the same trait. The eggwhite and honey painting our duke ordered at the court painter from Tuscany, another we had occasion to see, painted by a Flemish fellow, and several woodcuts done in Burgundy. All of them show the one-headed dragon, the white horse, the unhappy virgin. And the young man who looks neither like a saint nor a hero. He looks like a lover.

Justine in Turkey

by Martin Green

Like the narrator of Durrell's Alexandrian novels, I was once a schoolmaster-exile in a mysterious Eastern city. The year was 1956, and the city was Konya, in Turkey, called Iconium in the New Testament, when it was proselytized by St. Paul, later the capital of that brilliant Seljuk civilization which the Ottomans never equalled; and as such the home and burying place of Celaladdin Mevlana Rumi, the greatest mystic and poet of Islam, and after his death the centre (until Ataturk abolished them only twenty-five years ago) of the order of Mevlevi dervishes he founded, the famous whirling dervishes – the last of them, in secular dress, can still be seen on the streets of Konya; nowadays a wealthy merchant centre of nearly 100,000, and perhaps the most secretive and sullenly anti-Western of all the great cities of Asia Minor. A fair rival for Alexandria, for history. And equally enigmatic. Again and again we would spend an evening in a Turkish home, a dozen of us stiffly aligned along the four walls of the room, the hostess coming round with a bottle of perfume to sprinkle our hands, and then the series of coffees and lemonades and candies and banana liqueurs and sweet cookies, and all the while the exchange, across the empty centre of the room, of

enquiries and compliments and good wishes; while the sense of mutual bafflement grew more and more massive. Those stuffy gaudy rooms, crammed with gilt photographs and rosebud Sevres dishes, and gold-fringed purple velvet cloths, and gauze head-scarfs embroidered with silver wire, some pinned to the wall, some draped dustily over the springless Empire couches – they were just as incomprehensible, no more, no less, than the low-roofed, one-roomed peasant houses, with no chairs, one all-purpose stove, and the row of stiff, doll-like children along one wall, propped up against the hard, reed-stuffed bolsters you sit on – and no more than the whole sand-coloured Konya plain, rimmed with naked hills and dotted with giant wells (each serving an invisible village) all suspended in that uncanny double-distilled purity of air. Konya was silent – as silent as a city can be. But it was not me only it refused to answer. You had the sense, you felt in the air, that thousands of people were posing questions, and no-one was hearing more than an echo in reply. So far it still sounds like Alexandria. But in Durrell's city the questions seem to have been of the order of 'What is love?' and 'What is life?' What I heard in the silence of the pellucid Saturday afternoons of the square outside the Konya railway station, where two dozen arabas (horse and traps) had already gathered to await the evening passengers, and where peasants and soldiers had been gathering on the platform since morning, and where now the araba drivers drowsed in the dusty gardens of the two kahves at the corners of the cobblestoned space, with only the slim young waiters running to and fro and the boy boot-blacks scuffling in a corner, (the waiters running out of professional pride), the questions one heard were 'Why am I here? Why am *I* in *Konya*?' The people I was looking at didn't deal in such questions themselves; but that echo, that plangency was in the air for them, too. And don't think those aren't poignant questions, in their way, when asked often enough and dully enough.

Most obviously, of course, it was the non-European residents who were thinking that.

The Germans built the railway station, the railway hotel, and one or two big houses nearby for their men, as part of the Berlin–Baghdad railway, a brilliant imaginative scheme back before 1914, that might have made Berlin the capital of the world. It didn't, and Turkey, having picked the wrong side, suffered the consequences. But these strong grey decent unpretentious buildings

remained as a kind of consolation prize, in Konya as in the other Turkish towns along the line. Their doors fitted, their floors were quite solid, there were skirting boards along the walls, the shutters worked well even in 1956. Berlin's consolation must be that everything that worked in Turkey was attributed to German workmanship still.

In the station hotel, now renamed the Konya Koleji, we English teachers lodged and laboured (thirteen boys a class, twenty-three hours a week, 'This is a book. What is this? It's a book'). It was an expensive State boarding school, started the year I was there, where all the subjects were eventually to be taught in English, by Englishmen, who were paid, by Turkish standards, enormous, monstrous, salaries. We felt guilty, defiant, uneasy. On Saturdays we darted out into town at a brisk walk, to try to straighten out our unending tangles with the Education Office, or the Income Tax Office, or the foreign exchange section of the bank; to try to buy marmalade, or boot-polish, or fresh eggs; and we returned exhausted in an araba, defeated, even when we had got what we actually went for, negated, annulled, by having been so specially categorized, so courteously allegorized into Our Foreign Guests, so set apart from normal humanity. We felt like china dolls, lolling to and fro in our swaying, rattling araba (they went about six miles an hour), watching the bustling real people bursting the sidewalks.

We were the most thin-skinned of all the foreign groups, both individually, being teachers of literature and unmarried, and collectively, being the fewest and least under embassy protection. (We were the only foreigners employed directly by the Turkish government.) Besides, Englishmen are foreknown in Turkey to be 'very very *gentilmen*' – the long-fingered, narrow-handed type.

All the other foreign groups lived on the other side of the station from the town, in a set of new apartment houses there. Nearly all new buildings in Turkey, that people live in, are apartments, not houses. These were quite typical; smart, pink, angular, lop-sided, balconied, flat-roofed concrete boxes, crudely finished inside and soon looking dirty, but light and cheerful in general effect. It is the anonymously modern style in which all Ankara is built, thoroughly twentieth century – light, sensible, secular, hedonistic, the between-the-wars style.

One of these was occupied by the American army technical mission, which advised the Turkish army centre in Konya on the

use of new equipment, etc. There were usually three or four colonels there, a couple of sergeants and a corporal, occasionally a wife, but they would come and go all the time. Going with greater alacrity. And yet that villa (they ran all the apartments together) was Konya's cave of treasures. A truck went to the PX in Ankara every week and returned laden with things people had seen often enough on the movies, but never before in real life. Legendary, infinitely desirable things. Turkey's international credit is so bad, or was then in 1956, that things manufactured abroad, which had always been luxury items, were completely disappearing. Safety razor blades, for instance, disappeared just before I left. The American truck brought back electric razors from Ankara, and electric blankets, and a crate of whisky, and sixpaks of Coca-Cola, and drip-dry shirts, and records of *My Fair Lady*; above all it brought back films for private showing. They ran three or four films a week in their front room, and during the summer, out of doors, and the neighbourhood gathered round to watch, in their own gardens, or from their roofs, or from the road. People who lived nearby invited friends for the evening.

The other foreigners in Konya were often invited to these showings, but never any Turks; mostly because so many wanted to come so much. The pressure of desire round the American villa was constant and almost tangible. Every time the bell rang the people in the front room looked up apprehensively, listened to what was said, called out a question, prepared to detect the hidden purpose; all the time someone was trying to insinuate himself into the house, to associate himself with them, just to be seen in conversation with them – for the prestige more than for any direct profit. In Turkey every business transaction begins through social acquaintances as intermediaries.

For instance, the Turkish soldiers assigned to the Americans as personal servants (because they could speak some English) rose from being nothing (a Turkish private soldier got less than two liras a month in cash, which is less than a dollar) to the position of powers in the town. They ranked above majors in certain social situations, and under the Americans' protection they were in effect independent of all authority, civil or military. One was arrested for a driving accident while I was there; the Americans had him free in an hour and a half; otherwise, so they told me, he would have waited in jail for months before the case came to court. This created a feudal relationship between the Americans

and their servants, an English-public-school prefect and fag relationship. The Americans were large, condescending, indulgent, severe; the Turks were quick, pert, eager, charming.

The same relationship extended in some form to anyone who spoke English. Zeki, a Turkish officer, who had been a student at Oxford, who had come down only three months before, plum-mouthed and anti-American to the tips of his pigskin gloves, described to us how he had helped an American sergeant get into a local brothel when he was being turned away as too drunk; he retailed it all condescendingly, of course, but at length, and it was quite clear who was the lion in the net, and who was the mouse. He was glad of the association with Sergeant Snyder. Even we Englishmen, having to take all the time and never able to give, felt ourselves get condescending and exploitive, in self-defence.

But with all this, and because of it, the Americans were even more bored and ill-at-ease than we were. They could go shooting in the season (duck, geese, waterfowl, sometimes wild boar), go to Ankara, drink as much as they wanted, and play fierce poker. But the window of the front room they used as a club looked out on a rubbish dump, to which squat women in black shawls regularly came to rake over for bits of fuel and food which they put in their bags and took home. And the Americans, stretching, glancing out, a glass in their hands, felt suddenly like Louis XV. Their universe turned upside down. They found themselves guilty just where they'd always thought themselves most innocent. They'd always thought *they* were the common ordinary folks, like millions of other common ordinary folks; nothing special about them, take as you find, rather rough and plain, maybe; nothing fancy or Park Avenue, certainly, just a warm heart and a hearty welcome. Now, suddenly, they were Louis XV.

Across the road from them, in three apartment houses, were a group of ten or twelve Danish engineers, with wives and families, working for a firm that had sub-contracted from a British firm to build a number of silos in different parts of Turkey; the Danes did the building and then the British brought in the machinery. They were in the best position of all the foreigners. They had real work to do. They got good results. They had family lives. They were engineers, a happier profession than either teaching or soldiering. They belonged to a small nation, in no sense responsible for the modern world, but not, compared with Turkey, cut off from its enjoyments. It was a colony, a large, jolly, self-nourishing colony,

always getting together for traditional Danish meals, or traditional Danish songs, or the King's birthday.

But for them, too, most obviously for the wives, there came a time when the jollity became forced and repetitive, a matter of duty; it took so long to do the shopping, you never got what you really wanted, you were always being cheated, or suspecting you were; if you cleaned the house yourself it took for ever; if you had a maid you had nothing to do. Everything presented itself by its unpleasant aspect. Everything cost more, in effort, and yielded less, in enjoyment, than it did in Denmark; that little bit less and more that made it dissatisfying. What, after all, were they doing in this town, this country? How much longer did they have to choose between the eternal Mrs. Jensen next door and all the blank faces under black charshafs? Sharp-nerved from all the repetitive mutuality, they stared out of their windows at the alien victimized unyielding flatness of the Konya landscape; they felt their roots moving, probing the surface, seeking nourishment, retreating baffled and frightened.

But it was not their discontent that gleamed on the surface of the afternoon in the square outside the railway station, that stretched each minute to sixty-five seconds in the kahves and on the platform; the boot-blacks and cab-drivers there weren't sensitive to foreigners' self-questionings.

Starting from the station in the other direction, the road ran half a mile before it reached Konya proper. It was a wide road with very wide sidewalks planted with trees; a boulevard. But on either side lay ragged fields and waste-land.

Half-way along, the road took a slow wide bend round a big bronze pompously mounted statue of Ataturk. He was facing away from the town towards the station. This was said to be deliberate, to symbolize his displeasure with Konya for its religious reactionariness. Whether that is true I dare say no-one knows or ever knew. Such legends are curiously unconcerned with truth in the Western sense. Nobody *believes* it; perhaps no-one thinks any one else *believes* it; they merely repeat it. The Turkish language has a verb-ending which means 'they say that' or 'it is believed that'.

Such statues and busts and photographs and posters and paintings and badges of Ataturk are everywhere in Turkey. Every school had a set of them. There were gift books full of them. At official ceremonies they let up balloons marked with his features.

This face was all the more noticeable because there were no others represented; the old Mohammedan ordinance forbade pictures and statues of human beings, and the modern Turkish state had only one hero, one symbol. It was the face of a bully, all one big uncompromising nose and gathered brows. Everything else had sagged and faded from neglect. There was bleak bony challenge in the sharp jaw and forehead, but the flesh itself – the gleam of the skin, the curve of the eyes, the contour of the cheek – that was nothing; quite assertively nothing, assertively harsh, flaccid, used. He was photographed in every kind of Western clothes, from evening dress to swimming trunks (as propaganda for Westernization) and it was an ugly body, too, the thighs thick and clumsy, the belly loose, the clothes (pin-striped lounge-wear, big-checked sports suits) flashy and stuffy at the same time. Everything was sacrificed to will-power and purpose. Only a monstrous concentration could have accomplished what he did, of course. And what he accomplished was a very good thing, for Turkey, and for the world. He saved her pride. He saved us from a Near-Eastern Hitler. Perhaps it was the poverty of the art-work that disturbed me as much as Ataturk himself in these portraits. Statue, photograph, painting, they were all so obviously second-rate, so flatly imitative, so unattractive; the artists simplified again what he himself had so grimly simplified, until there were only three or four thick strong strokes, strong bronze strokes, like a gong. Ataturk was a great inspiration to his people still; young Turks seemed to me much readier to die for their country than young Englishmen; but the inspiration, the call, seemed more to death, to duty, to national discipline, than to personal fulfilment.

From there to the Alaeddin Mosque (one of the finest Seljuk buildings still standing) where the real town began, there were the most charming type of Turkish houses; presumably built around 1900. They were extremely irregular and light, made mostly of wood, the walls plastered, with rather fantastic gables and balconies and porches and steps, painted light blue or light green, with pretty flower motifs. They were rather frivolous even in conception, suggesting the Austro-Hungarian Empire and summer resorts in the Balkans; and in execution, distinctly crazy, with balconies sagging, floors tilting, steps crumbling beneath your tread. These were well-to-do houses, of course; some of the wealthy merchants we knew still led a life you could associate with

such houses; six or seven families driving off to a neighbouring spring, with servants and hampers, to listen to music under the trees, and eat sherbet and rose-jelly; or to a farm-house belonging to one of them, where a lamb roasted whole would be eaten out of doors, and we would sit on into the evening, in the rose-garden, drinking raki and telling stories. But such things were on the decline; they had an old-fashioned air; people no longer found them so exciting as the entertainments they saw at the movies.

It was here, too, that the boulevard found its justification; it was admirable for *gezmek*. Gezmek is the verb our pupils translated as 'to walk up and down all the time', which is somehow a much more self-containing and self-justifying activity in Turkey. On summer evenings and Sundays and holidays the sidewalks were really very crowded with people doing just that, mostly groups of men, arm in arm, with the gramophone music floating out above; they didn't go to or come from anywhere; you would see them, at the Ataturk statue and the Alaeddin Mosque, swing round and start back the way they came.

Just before the Alaeddin Mosque was the Ordu Evi, the Officers' Club. This was rather similar in spirit to the houses I have been speaking of, but much larger and solider, a stone mansion, and very handsome. It had a large multi-terraced garden three or four feet above street level, and the house itself was regular and solid, ample, dignified, gracious. It was built, like others of the finest houses, by one of the wealthy Greek merchant families who were prominent in the old Ottoman empire but were got rid of in 1922–23.

An Ordu Evi is quite different from an English or American officers' club; in the way the army it belongs to is different. The army in Turkey is much larger, much more efficient (especially in relation to national standards), much more respectable as a profession, than it is with us. The Turks have always been a military people, their rulers a military caste. That was why the Ottomans could allow every subject race and creed so much autonomy and self-advancement – they contented themselves with maintaining order and self-defence. But that army, despite its readiness to die and kill, is oddly unmilitary to our sense. It is a cultural and a class institution, ordinarily superior in taste and manners and learning to any local population, even in a great city. In Konya, for example, nearly all the officers felt in exile; they yearned for Ankara and Istanbul; the ideal Turkish officer is someone far

more sophisticated and intellectual than the ideal British or American officer.

So the Ordu Evi in Konya played always Western music on its gramophone, and relayed it out over the terrace, for the benefit of as many as possible. It showed a film in English (lent by the Americans) in its ballroom once a week; and the room was full of teachers, doctors, lawyers, bank managers, the progressive, forwarding-looking part of the population. Most of the balls of the season were held here, in the magnificent salons—the Doctors' Ball, the Teachers', the Army's own, all the bureaucratic castes, for they were all Western-minded. It was the merchants who were the reactionaries; they were not seen at the Ordu Evi.

And here I felt myself closer to the source of that sad throb in the Konya air, that mournful pause between the minutes in the empty evening light. To the army officers, especially to the young and unmarried ones, Konya was presenting as blank a face as it did to us Europeans, and much bleaker a challenge. They had their elegant close-fitting uniforms, and personal servants, and their duties were very light, but the town had no private or public entertainments they liked. Konya society, especially at their level, was purse-proud and puritanical in both manners and morals. It was provinciality incarnate and aggressive; hostile to all progress and modernism. There was no intermingling. All the young officers could do was sit together on the terrace of the Ordu Evi, drinking tea all afternoon, making conversation, while American popular songs of two years back blared out over their heads. Private soldiers, wearing white jackets, stood with bowed heads to take the order, then ran to and fro with the glasses of tea and tiny cups of coffee. The officers talked about Istanbul, Paris, New York, Plymouth convertibles, Martinis, Grace Kelly, the 64,000 dollar question. Then they went back to the room that often three or four shared, and which was crowded and fetid and unfurnished to a degree which an Anglo-Saxon could hardly imagine.

It remained one of the oddest sights, even at the end of my year, to see two of these young officers, or young teachers or university students, coming down the street hand in hand, or with their arms round each other, and one holding a single flame-yellow marigold in his free hand, carrying it occasionally to his nose, and then perhaps to his companion's. This is natural, perhaps, to a society in which women are subordinate; with women out of sight, men expand to take on every variety of human posture, instead of

relegating some to the other sex. But it seemed to me to draw nourishment also from the ineffectuality of their position. Their careers were so much out of their own control, so alien, so different in texture from the life of their affections, that they made no connection between the two. The grim shadow of Ataturk fell across half their lives; let the other half be all sunshine and marigolds.

We could see it all when they were having their shoes cleaned; we could feel it in ourselves. The boot-blacks, nearly all old men (the boys stayed round the railway station and the bus station) often took ten or twelve minutes, squatting before and beneath you, clasping your foot to their breast, rubbing the paste in with their fingers sometimes, breathing and spitting on your shoe, warming it with their life-warmth. With a friend beside you and a newspaper under your arm, whether you were standing in the street with one knee proudly arched, or lounging at a table on the terrace with the whole leg carelessly surrendered, you felt a certain aesthetic rightness in things. This was a proud melancholy romantic rightness, of course. Any culture which forbids an educated man to work with his hands and arms infuses an unconscious Byronism into the educated class's temperament and philosophy. We longed to light our own stoves at school. But we had to ring for a servant; and most often, before the job was done, we had to go and find him and bring him back, and make a scene about it. There was a haughty melancholy in the air of Konya too.

In the centre of town was the government building, which contained the administrative offices of the province of Konya, the largest province in Turkey. It was a huge, stark, concrete block, featureless except for an unconvincing stone front at one end and some grim grilled windows. On the sidewalks around it were all kinds of little tables and handcarts, selling curios, coins, nuts, simits (a pastry between a roll and a pretzel), shoe-shines, papers, etc. There were several little typewriter tables (sometimes just an up-ended box) where the public letter-writer sat, tapping away with one finger, while his peasant client squatted stolidly beside him, leaving the chair vacant. One needed special stamps and special paper for every kind of official business, so the letter-writer had a near-monopoly. One needed a photograph on every copy, too, so there were four or five big old-fashioned cameras on these sidewalks, each complete with a vividly embroidered (scarlet-silk birds, silver-wire trees) black backdrop. And all along the

sidewalks, between these stalls, beneath the townspeople's feet, the peasants squatted with their backs towards though not leaning against the stark concrete wall. They were waiting for others inside who were waiting to see some official; changelessly, beyond excitement, beyond patience, waiting, consummated in the act.

These were the leather-skinned, expressionless, steady-as-a-rock, invulnerable Anatolians, able to squat for a day at an office door without emotion, never to be caught out of their own psychological territory. The women wore wide baggy trousers and innumerable layers of looseness, much patched and sometimes with quite garish patterns, but conglomerately gloomy. The *charshaf*, the shawl they wore over their heads, was most often black, or mostly black. Those not used to town pulled it across their faces under the eyes, when a man approached; if he was a foreigner, an infidel, they all did. In the villages themselves a woman would turn off the road if she saw a man approaching, or saw him behind her; she would squat there with her back to the road, till he could no longer be watching her, before she hoisted her burden up on her back again and resumed her shapeless shuffle home. The men wore something like extremely baggy riding breeches, made often of a very hard thick dull greasy cloth, and suit coats often much patched.

Their hardened endurance was in the air too; but if they asked themselves 'What are we doing in Konya?' their question had no pathos, no personal plangency; theirs was the old ominous unappeasable obbligato of the Konya plain.

Inside the Hukumet building, the government building, the offices were arranged in two squares round two cracked, forgotten, weed-infested courtyards. The corridors connecting the offices ran around the insides of these squares, and looked out on these courtyards, and consequently didn't get much sunlight. The ceilings here were extremely lofty, and the corridors themselves cold and dank, of the crudest, most unmodified concrete. Applicants for a driver's licence, suers for divorce, bandits, rapists, embezzlers, some under guard, some in whispering groups, all the humbleness, sullenness, and desperate cunning in the world was there, standing or squatting at the tall narrow doors, or following some official down the corridor; as foreigners we hurried past them with the effect of Prince Philip on a ceremonial visit – from their point of view there couldn't have been much difference – even when we were alone and unattended and unexpected and positively not wanted.

The offices inside were like Dickens's offices – dusty and shabby and gloomy, with dozens of desks and enormous copybooks and clerks wearing drab aprons over their suits. Outside the doors of the important officials stood the porters, door-openers, coffee-carriers, etc.; they would stand there till someone called them in, and then enter timidly and stand with dropped eyes and clasped hands. They got about seventy liras a month – under twenty-five dollars, at the official rate of exchange. At the other extreme, the heads of departments and chief inspectors were very spruce and glossy round the collar and teeth, all affable dignity, compliments on your Turkish, and courteous assurances. They knew, we felt, that a shade less affability on their part would provoke a hundred anxieties in us, would reduce the already anxious to despair. Every so often you came across the other type, the Ataturk type, all harshness, energy, and anger, with hard congested eyes, who got more done in a day than the next ten offices in a week; but most were amiable Pontius Pilates, charming, intelligent, self-indulgent, procrastinating, evasive, ineffectual.

Between these two extremes lay the most numerous and the most pathetic class of inhabitants of the Hukumet building. These were the clerks, bending over the huge ledgers, endlessly copying one document from another, munching on sticky candies or pistachio nuts, giggling together with one eye on the inspector's door; the women all in dusty blue aprons, the men some of them in shiny stained unpatched suits. The same unflattering light fell equally on both sexes, denying them all privacy, all difference. They were paid, I think, between a hundred and twenty and two hundred and forty liras a month; you couldn't get an apartment that was decent, by any definition, for less than eighty. These offices had the seediness, dustiness, and dyspepsia, the malice, pettiness, and irritability, of the offices in Balzac and Flaubert, in the nineteenth-century Russian writers. It was the sordid boredom of a provincial bureaucracy, as exiled as the officers or the foreigners, and with no escape and no compensations. But it was worse now, in the twentieth century, because these clerks read every day in the paper about Istanbul and Ankara, and saw every week at the movies Long Island luxury in *Sabrina Fair* and the Texan way of life in *Giant*. American films are as popular in Turkey as in America; far more popular than Turkish films. The American way of life is perfectly well known in Turkey; the refrigerator, central heating, television, two cars – all the clerks in

the Hukumet building could recite it for you. They probably knew the average income. Certainly they could divide a hundred and twenty by 2.8, the official rate of exchange of the lira for the dollar. They re-realized each day what a stale dank wasteland little corner of the world Konya was.

That was the ultimate source of the just inaudible buzzing, the low hum of human awareness in the Konya air. It had none of the glamour of Alexandria's malaise, after all; there was nothing metaphysical about it.

Poems by David Cornel DeJong

JOVIAL AND BLOODY

I am not what you'd call handsome
but bear myself like a scaffolded
edifice, because of my epaulets –
those are deserved: service to God
and country – but my mind is
a crystal old soothsayers shall
read to spell out a next war,
one well versed in casualties
and furnished with cages for doldrums
which keep limping behind it.
And never mind another point or two.

When I was a chit of seven,
I picked vinca and buttercups.
It became most evident something
should be done with me by a formal
father and a heartfelt mother;
I was presented with the studies
of moles and molds, and such toads
as were beneficial, and small
details and matters like them
led me to the uniform, which encases
me so I can't smell flowers.

I've laid a couple of wars behind me
with a never-mind the crimson and
hell-for-leather in victories;
I tried behavior meant for peace
but at best achieved a tracing
of veins for strategies and begot
someone's sons with epaulets,
and breathe stentorian toasts
and drink to zealous attitudes,
before the upstart liver gets
one more stripe than myself.

METAPHORIC

This union is called a noble thing,
yet is hardly more than sin committed
but unrepented; hold my hand now
and we will cross it as if
it were no more than a park where
deer flick their gentle mops
of tails in comprehension.

Me and you enshrined, and surely
sung upon by all those fugues
even the merest sparrow could render;
everyone should see your eyes
shining in a game of surrender,
while triumph laps at my hands
but every thought needs rescue.

This could be a spectacular act,
with haloes of silence in all
the shrillness of humdrum nature
crowning us, but we say the fey
millionth-hand words once again
while in awkward truth the earth
collapses ten feet beneath us.

KILLING

The body lay like a sacrifice
and to kneel on it the cop
asked no priest's permission,
a halo of antiseptics
dwelled all around for
the coming siren to respect
if it only could.

Here is untearstained me,
eyes belligerent to miss
no sign or token, to see
a red question mark of blood
touch the cop's blue knees
and smell an astonishing
smell of new pee.

I have nothing here to say
nor have tongue in cheek
for someone's mum-or-daddy
in case this body had been me,
now wrapped into a blanket
yellow for a basement sale,
for a corridor in hell.

But you get aged with lessons
smelled and seen, and spine
held cold, whispering no
answer to a question mark
of blood in which the cop
kneels manfully and
deems unwarranted.

Drawing by Mervyn Peake

Drawing by Eric Hebborn

The SALL

by William C. Sayres

The green-robed figures filed into the room.

The white-robed figure behind the altar said, 'Is he among you, Durban?'

The largest of the green-robed figures said, 'No, he is not among us. But he comes.'

The altar was marble, and shaped like an upright coffin. The collars of the robes extended into hoods with rusted nails pointing outward and downward from rows above the eyeslits. Between the eyeslits were small ivory likenesses of the altar: their bases were pierced for noseholes. The mouth gashes were rimmed with diamonds.

'Is the sword ready, Durban?' said the white-robed figure.

'It is ready.'

'Does he know?'

'I told him nothing. But Kartow was with him longer.'

'Did you tell him anything, Kartow?'

'Only that he was . . . selected.'

'Let us kneel.'

The figures knelt on the black tile floor. The roomlight dimmed and turned red. Organ music, endlessly repeating a theme from *Parsifal*, drifted up from speakers set in the floor.

'Brothers, brothers,' said the white-robed figure, 'are we impure?'

'We are impure,' chanted the green-robed figures.

'And who will deliver us from our impurity, brothers?'

'The SALL will deliver us.'

'So be it. Let us reflect.'

The red roomlight darkened. The organ music lost its treble to a muted but dominant bass. The door opened.

Two green-robed figures guided a third into the room. The third was unhooded. In the dark red light he looked like a flayed clown. He was led to the altar.

'Wait, wait,' he mumbled without confidence. 'I want to go home.'

'You *are* home,' said the white-robed figure.

'There's some mistake here. I'm Henry Twiller, and I haven't done anything wrong.'

'Of course you are,' said the white-robed figure, 'and of course you haven't.'

'What's all this stuff about being selected?'

'The signs, Mr. Twiller, are infallible.'

'I don't know about any signs. All I know is, I was getting in my car after work, you can check on it, and these guys barged in and . . .' He shook his head. He was close to crying. 'Already I was late getting started home,' he said plaintively. 'The wife'll give me hell.'

'I assure you, Mr. Twiller,' said the white-robed figure, 'she will not. Durban, you may bring the sword.'

'Now look, fellows,' said Twiller. 'Fun's fun, and I've been a good sport all my life. But I don't get any of this, honest. The joke's no good, you know, if I don't get it. So why don't we just . . .'

'Here is the sword,' said Durban. The white-robed figure took it and unsheathed it.

'What's that for?' whispered Twiller. 'You're not going to use that thing on me, are you?'

'Of course not, Mr. Twiller,' said the white-robed figure. 'It is part of the benediction. You simply must thrust . . .'

'What benediction?'

'Yours. Have you heard of the Society of SALL?'

'You mean Saul, like in the Bible?'

'Pronounced the same, Mr. Twiller, but spelled S-A-L-L. A relationship is indeed involved, but we need not go into that now. Suffice to say, Mr. Twiller, that the Society of SALL is well known to many, vaguely known to others, and would in time have been known to you.'

'It does sound kind of familiar, like something I might have dreamt once, but I can't seem to . . .'

'Bring in the Husk, Durban.'

Durban left the room. The kneelers rose. The muted bass deepened. Durban returned, leading another green-robed figure.

'Kneel, Husk,' said the white-robed figure.

The newcomer knelt before the altar. 'Are you ready to renounce?' said the white-robed figure.

'I am ready to renounce,' said the newcomer dully.

'Mr. Twiller,' said the white-robed figure, 'do you notice anything unusual about this person?'

'To tell the truth, he looks about the same as the rest of you.'

'Precisely. He *is* the same as the rest of us. He was, of course, once the SALL. Now the thrust I was telling you about is simply—.'

'I don't understand. If he was the SALL, whatever that is, why isn't he still—?'

'Forgive me, Mr. Twiller, for returning the interruption. The SALL, obviously, is the godhead of our Society, incarnate in successive mortals since the separation from Rome. The Husk, naturally, is the outgoing SALL. The signs were quite clear. They always are.'

'You mean, the SALL's replaced whenever the signs say so?'

'Of course. A fall from spiritual grace is indicated at once. We consider this a considerable advantage over the Romans and the various splinter sects. The Husk understands all this, he agrees, he insists. Don't you, Husk?'

'I insist,' said the Husk passively.

'Now when you thrust, Mr. Twiller, the quickest way is –'

'What do you mean, when I thrust? With the sword?'

'Of course. It's the most important part of the replacement ceremony. Surely you don't feel much like the SALL *now*, do you?'

'Me? Good gosh, no! I don't feel that way at all.'

'Exactly. They never do, before the replacement ceremony.'

'They? How many SALLS have there been, anyway?'

'Not many. Some last long, some do not. Conceivably, Mr. Twiller, you could last forever.'

'Look now, I'm no dummy, I can see what you're getting at. But it's crazy to pick on me. You don't know me from Adam.'

'Just so. Most men *could* be taken for Adam. Precisely why we must rely on signs. Now let us get on with it. Take the sword, please.'

The sword was placed in Twiller's hands. The red roomlight began to brighten, and the treble began to ascend. 'What do I do with it?' he said dazedly.

'Exactly what I've been explaining to you. The Husk, of course, will stand there, and you must stand . . . here. Now when you thrust –'

'Stop right there! If you think I'm going to –'

'I'm afraid, Mr. Twiller, I must ask you to calm yourself. The more blatant emotions are prejudicial to the ceremony. How would you like it if I shouted in your . . . past church? Your attitude is puzzling. How else do you think the benediction can be conferred?'

'I don't know anything about that.'

'Of course you don't. That's why we're guiding you. The Husk expects it, we expect it; everybody who knows anything about it expects it. So please co-operate.'

'But I never hurt anybody before.'

'Of course you have. Everybody has. Now you just place the point on the black patch on his robe there, and try to keep the edge parallel with the floor when you thrust. Experience has shown that the harder the thrust, the better for everybody.'

'If the signs happen to change tomorrow, I guess I'd be in *his* place, hey?'

'The signs may never change, Mr. Twiller. And even if they do, it is possible that some time would pass before a successor was indicated. Besides, the signs never *happen* to change. Can you think of any reason why they should change, Mr. Twiller?'

'No, no.'

'Very well, then. Listen carefully to the music. In approximately three minutes, it will stop momentarily. When it does, thrust. The rest of us, excluding the Husk naturally, will be kneeling, but do not attempt to remove the sword by yourself. We will do that for you.'

'Big thanks for small favors,' muttered Twiller.

'You said something, Mr. Twiller?'

'No, nothing that would matter. But I don't see how I can do it, honest.'

'Get ready, Mr. Twiller.' The robed figures knelt. The music increased in volume, with the treble now dominant. The red light continued to brigthen.

Twiller mechanically raised the point to the patch. He lowered it almost immediately. In the bright red light the heavy sweat covering his face looked like new blood. The Husk stood virtually immobile: only the nail eyebrows trembled. Twiller leaned closer: 'Do you . . . do you *feel* any of this?' he whispered.

The diamond mouth opened slightly, then closed. The nail eyebrows trembled more noticeably. Twiller tried again: 'Are you . . . were you like *me*?'

The hooded head began to dip, then changed its motion into a barely perceptible shake. The diamond mouth stiffened, and the nail eyebrows stopped trembling. 'Come on,' Twiller whispered, 'tell me. What more can they do to you for telling me?'

The Husk made no response. The mouth was shut so tightly the diamonds seemed to merge into a single thick streak of wild red fire.

'To hell with you then,' Twiller mumbled. He raised the point to the patch again, and waited. The brightness intensified until it

was painful to the eyes, and the volume mounted until it was painful to the ears. Twiller found himself bracing for the thrust.

The music stopped. Twiller's arm tensed. The nail brows were trembling again. The point strained to pierce the patch. Twiller's arm began to quiver, then dropped. 'Can't,' he said.

The music started again, very softly now. The lights dimmed. The figures rose. 'That was unfortunate, Mr. Twiller,' said the white-robed figure.

'If I can't I can't. Maybe that means the signs were wrong, hey?' Twiller looked at the sword, let it fall.

'Not at all, Mr. Twiller. We have had to go through this before. Durban, you may escort the Husk out. Kartow, you may have to help Durban.' The white-robed figure sighed. 'I am afraid, Mr. Twiller, you have done a disservice to the Husk. Now he will have to prepare himself all over again. Perhaps you will be more charitable next time.'

'What do you mean, next time? What makes you think a next time would change anything?'

'Mr. Twiller,' said the white-robed figure patiently, 'you forget that our experience in these matters has not been inconsiderable. You may not believe it, but an early reluctance to the Call is more customary than not. But acceptance is, of course, inevitable.' He moved to the front of the altar, and pressed a small button. 'I've become quite resigned to these little delays. They do, however, make things rather awkward.' He swung open the front panel of the altar.

'What's in there?'

'It is quite empty, of course. That is, physically empty. Its spiritual content is, naturally, inexhaustible. We trust the emanations will cause your early reconsideration. Please enter peaceably, Mr. Twiller. Those of your predecessors who made a fuss only embarrassed everybody.'

'You want *me* to go inside that thing? What good would that do?'

'You will absorb a certain grace, Mr. Twiller. When you have absorbed enough, you will be ready to participate in the replacement ceremony.'

'I'm not even sure I could fit in there.'

'You will find the fit adequate. Hurry up, Mr. Twiller, the light will soon be gone.'

'How can I breathe?'

'There will be sufficient air, if you use it temperately. Hurry, Mr. Twiller. You will be all the more uncomfortable if we have to . . . place you in.'

The music began to increase in volume again. Twiller tried to peer into the altar, and was gently nudged inside. The white-robed figure closed the front panel. 'We will return eventually,' he said. 'When we do, we hope you will be more favorably disposed to accept the honors offered. If you are still . . . over-modest, we will have to abandon you a second time, and as many times thereafter as needed.' He stooped and picked up the sword. 'To my knowledge, a second time has rarely been necessary, and a third time never.'

The light was almost gone now. The music, already so loud the altar began to shiver in resonance, grew ever louder. The robed figures slowly filed out of the room.

Poems by Samuel Hazo

GETTYSBURG

In iron where their horses reared and neighed,
the mounted generals survey like scouts
long rows of rusting cannon wheeled abreast
and aimed at Appalachian fields scarecrowed
with sculptured infantry in statuesque
attack before the ridge of Pickett's rout.

Necklaced with kodaks and binoculars,
June tourists range beyond the battlements
to search for ricochets in trunks of trees
or photograph old barns with shrapnel scars,
the pledge of Lincoln on a plaque of brass
and graves that hold the bones of regiments.

Cold iron and the quarried stone rehearse
past carnage in a frieze of history.
Hard replicas replace the buried boys
who shook no fists against the universe.
They charged the barricades and were destroyed
where tourists grimly talk photography.

HER SON, MY STUDENT

I am averse to wakes, speak nothing apt
or easeful in the easeless anterooms
awry with sobs, bouquets and bannered wreaths.
Before the mother I could only say
I taught the boy in school for half a year.
I walked away defeated by her tears

and walked all evening lost within her loss.
Wild sumacs bent beneath the falling walls
of wind, and clouds developed in the dark
like ice on zero lakes or frost on glass.
I hoped someone would come and call my name,
but no one knew me there, and no one came.

The Ceremony

by Luis S. P. León

After a very hot day, the west breeze began to blow when the sun set. The fishermen put out to sea. A red, cloudless sky announced a dark night, good for fishing. The three friends, sitting before their tent on top of the dune, saw them leave. The seagulls disappeared, flying towards the island cliffs. From a near-by meadow, where sparse grass grows around a fountain, children came to the beach with their oxen. They took them to the shore, and the animals entered the water slowly. In the half light of the sunset, their big, dark bodies were like rocks on the water. Then they disappeared among the pine trees, toward the village beyond the dunes.

The three friends remained alone, sitting in silence at the edge of the forest. From the top of the dune they overlooked all the shore, to where the sand ends and the cliff begins. The scene repeated itself every evening. When the sun set the fishermen went down to the sea, the children returned to the village with their oxen, and the beach became deserted.

The three friends, smoking in silence, were like three shadows

among the pine trees. One of them, dark, lying on the ground; another, blond, sitting, leaning against the trunk of a tree. Maria, also in silence, kneeling between them. Maria looked like an Indian. Her skin was brown, and she had two long braids falling over her shoulders.

They drank a thick, dark, red wine. She was the first to move. She got up slowly, and going down the dune she approached the sea.

The two men saw her leave, almost lost in darkness.

'Maria is still looking for the golden fish,' the blond one said. His voice was low and tired.

'If she finds it, tell her to let me see it before she throws it back into the water.'

There followed a long silence.

'Maria is looking for a silver sea shell.'

'If she finds it, tell her to let me hear the depths of the sea.'

They drank from the almost empty bottle. Maria came back to them and sat down. The one leaning against the tree asked her:

'Maria, did you find what you were looking for?'

She said no.

'Maria' – and his voice was monotonous as if he were repeating a question that had been repeated one thousand times already – 'can you tell us what you were looking for?'

She lay on the sand and looked at him.

'I was looking for you, but I did not find you.'

The other friend smiled and passed her the wine.

'Drink, and you will see us in the bottom of the bottle.'

She drank, and they remained in silence once more. When there was no more wine, Maria entered the tent and came out with another bottle. The one that was leaning against the tree came close to her. He leant his head on her shoulder and kissed her on the neck.

'Maria,' he asked, 'which of us are you in love with?'

Maria did not answer.

He kissed her again and repeated his question.

'Maria, which of us are you in love with?'

She caressed him and said in a very low voice:

'It is better for you not to know.'

And she put the bottle in his hands, so that he could drink.

She turned to the dark friend, lying by her side.

'You never ask me, neither do you answer when I ask you.'

The friend stood up. His body rose from the earth, standing out against the black sky.

'I never have an answer to give,' he said. And he stood before them, watching them in silence. Then he knelt down, and taking the bottle from the hands of the blond friend, he drank until he left it empty.

They went down to the beach, holding hands, and ran along the shore. They were barefoot, and felt the cold of the damp sand.

They went to the end of the beach and then sat down, Maria between them. She kissed them, two long kisses, her arms around their necks.

'I am in love with both of you,' she said.

They kissed her, one on each cheek.

'Nobody asked you,' the blond friend said.

'You asked me a moment ago.'

They kissed her again.

'A moment . . . perhaps. Who knows . . . Besides you cannot be in love. You are like a goddess on a pedestal, so that you can be adored without being loved and without loving . . . Maria, never be in love. The gods never love; we, gods, never love. We brought you to our heaven, and there is no room in it for the love of the others. Love yourself, and us in you. It is more perfect to be several persons at the same time, than not to be at all because of a love. But it is better not to speak now. Let the night enter our mouths.'

Maria did not answer. She had heard this many other times. It was their ritual to repeat day after day the same words, in a continuous re-creation of the same scene, already lived, in which each of them knew his part perfectly. It was a perpetual play, but yet always new. They spoke very little, but when they did, words took new meanings, that had taken her a long time to understand. Sometimes she wondered why she was there, with them, on that lonely beach. The nearest village was a group of houses among the pine-clad dunes. There, lived 'men'. Not they. They were like gods on the beach, far from everybody, sunk in their world, dense and complicated. They, her two friends, who sometimes seemed so far away. And yet, with them began and ended the world. There they were all alone, more remote than ever, centers of a single world, confused into one. It was a world where their lives were a single experience shared to the ultimate depth of their sensations. Inside their small tent, lying on the ground, they enjoyed

the agony of their common confinement, like three bodies buried in a single narrow coffin.

When they awoke and opened the tent, the mist had disappeared. The beach was full of light. It was almost midday. The sea shone under the sun, green near the sand, blue far from the shore. From the near-by village there came, from time to time, the noise of a life of other men. But the beach was abandoned, polished by the night tide. Seagulls had left their star-shaped traces upon the wet sand. The small meadow around the fountain already had its yellow oxen grazing under the sun, while the children dozed in the shadow of the elm trees, by the stream. The fountain, of water cool even in the heat of summer, was like a miracle of freshness in the dunes. It made puddles in the meadow, and streamed lazily toward the sea without ever reaching it. The small stream dried up in the sand.

In the shadow of the elm trees, there where water sprang out of the earth, some wild lilies grew. Their white flowers shone in the shade of the trees. One day, Maria adorned her black hair with white lilies. Maria, with her brown skin and dark eyes, looked like an Indian goddess crowned with snow. But she left the shade of the trees, went down to the beach and sat in the sun; the lilies became yellow and withered. One of the friends said to her: 'Your godliness has died.' And the other took off the faded crown and kissed her on the eyes. 'Rise up and return to life, my friend.' And they both, raising her on their arms, took her in procession to the pine trees; and in the deserted forest they repeated once more their mutual confusion.

They went down to the beach, hot with sun and midday light. They bathed in the sea, then went to the village. Everybody knew them there. They had been looked upon with curiosity when they first arrived, at the beginning of summer, to camp near the beach. Then the villagers became used to seeing them in the tavern, where they went everyday, and they even exchanged smiles with them, without talking.

When fishermen went down to the beach on moonless nights, to go out fishing, they always found them sitting under the trees, or on the rocks, on the cliff. The friends were always silent, or talking so low that they could not be heard. The fishermen found them very strange, and the village women did not approve of the life of those three strangers, sleeping together in their small tent. But after a couple of weeks they got accustomed to them, and even

became proud of their visitors when they saw Maria painting a canvas of the oxen that grazed on the meadow. The two men did not do such interesting things. Every day, after having their lunch at the tavern, they spent hours writing, and very often tearing up what they had written, only to start again. Then, they would go to the beach, and there they would swim, sleep in the sun, or drink wine while sitting before their tent. But all three were nice, and from time to time they even played with the children. Some of the village girls tried to find some pretext to go to the tavern when the visitors were there, and they envied Maria, whom they called 'the Indian', sitting between her two beautiful friends. Sometimes, when going to the meadow where the children minded the cattle, the girls went out of their way in order to cross the beach and see the friends there, almost naked, on the sand, with their brown skins shining under the sun.

Every afternoon, before leaving the tavern, they always bought several bottles of wine and brought them to the beach.

One night, when all the fishermen were out at sea and there were no boats on the beach, they made a great fire. They drank the wine they had brought that afternoon, and though it was late in the night, one of the friends went to the village and came back with more bottles.

When the fire was almost out, Maria stood up and danced around it. She danced barefoot, with neither music nor song, and she knelt down from time to time, to kiss her two friends on the lips.

'Maria', one of them said, 'your kisses taste of seaweed and wine.'

She interrupted her dance for a moment.

'My kisses are for you.'

And she danced again.

'Maria,' the other said, 'your kisses taste of grass and tobacco.'

And she repeated: 'My kisses are for you.'

Maria danced until she fell on the sand, her hair loose on her shoulders, and her skin shining with sweat. The two friends crawled to her side and they gave her to drink. They offered her red wine cupped in their hands, and she drank. And letting her head fall backwards, she stretched out on the sand and stayed motionless, looking at stars with wide open eyes. The two friends passed their wine-soaked hands over her face, and her cheeks were dyed with blood, as if her eyes had been pulled out. Then, they passed their red, wet hands all over her body.

'The blood of the golden fish covers your body, my love,' one of them said, 'but I shall drink it until I discover you again.'

And the other friend, kneeling by her side, raising his arms to the night, said, as in a prayer: 'The blood of the sun illuminates your body, but I shall bring you back to our world without stars.'

And lying down by her side, they kissed her until her skin shone again in the night. Then she stood up, and raising herself before her two kneeling friends, she emptied a bottle of wine on their heads, and then threw it into the sea. Then they drank again, and with the wine that was left they extinguished the fire.

When the last live coal had disappeared, one of the friends said: 'Now go to the tent, Maria. Close the door and bind your eyes. But do not sleep. Tonight we shall celebrate our ceremony.'

Maria put her arms around his waist, and kissed his chest.

'When will you let me see it?' she asked.

The two friends looked at each other.

'Still you will have to wait. Perhaps tomorrow, or perhaps in a century, but not tonight.'

And leaving them, Maria went to the tent, closed the door, bound her eyes with a handkerchief, and sat down listening to the noises of the night. From the dune she could hear the sea. For a moment Maria heard some steps on the sand, but they went away and were lost in the continuous breaking of the waves on the beach.

Inside the tent, still sitting with her eyes bound, Maria awaited them, as on many other nights, when they had celebrated the ceremony she could not see. While she waited, Maria thought of herself and of her two friends. And on thinking of them, she felt their arms around her body, their two faces very close to hers, and their lips on her neck and on her shoulders. The two friends were different from her. They were there, inside herself, kissing her from within. Her thoughts changed and she saw them no longer as two separate persons. On the contrary, the two friends were nothing but one; and that unequalled one was inside her. She could feel it perfectly, within her small body, under her warm skin. And her thoughts lost themselves in the contemplation of that single friend existing within her. But, perhaps it was she, Maria, who lived within them. Within them both, at the same time. Although they were not two, but one . . . And she could not find a solution.

She heard steps approaching the tent. Steps of one single, heavy person, walking carefully as if it were difficult for him to keep his balance. She could hear quite distinctively the noise of

the sand under the bare feet. Then an excited breathing that became louder and louder, till it muffled the noise of the footsteps.

'Maria, come out of the tent.'

It was the voice of one of the friends.

Maria unbound her eyes and came out. On the top of the dune, his black silhouette standing out against the night, was one of the friends. An enormous friend, with great arms hanging on either side of his body. When Maria's eyes became accustomed to seeing, she could make out what that shadow was, standing before her. One of the friends was there, with his legs firmly planted on the ground, carrying the other friend in his arms, his blond head hanging from his shoulders as if it were united to the body only by loose threads, his legs dangling in the air.

Maria approached him. She helped him lay the body on the sand, carefully, as if they were handling something very fragile, at the point of breaking. His clothes were soaked with sea water, adhering to his body as if they wanted to confuse themselves with his skin. They undressed him and wrapping him with a blanket, took him into the tent. There they sat, one on each side, and by the light of a pocket torch they watched him for a long time, in silence, till he opened his eyes and moved. He was shaking with cold, and they covered him with one blanket more.

'I was afraid,' he said, 'once more I was afraid.'

Maria put a cigarette in his mouth, but he dropped it. The other friend took the cigarette and squashed it.

Maria felt cold inside, her friend's cold, trembling under the blankets. She laid down at his side and brought her face close to his cold cheek. She felt his frozen skin against hers.

'He is going to die,' she said.

The other friend looked at her with shining eyes.

'Heretic, do you think that he can die just like that, wrapped in a blanket, like any other man?'

Maria turned her head. She repeated the same phrase: 'He is going to die', though she felt ashamed of having said it. She wanted to change her idea, but was unable to think of anything else. After a long silence she turned towards the other friend and, not daring to look at his face, she said:

'We could take him out to the beach, and lay him down on the sand.'

But he did not answer; he seemed to be very far away, with his eyes fixed upon the face of his frozen friend.

Maria repeated, as if she were thinking aloud:

'We could take him out to the beach, and lay him down on the sand.'

The voice of the other friend came from very far:

'No, the dawn is breaking, and the seagulls would see him.'

And they did not speak again, until day came. They fell asleep, like many other times, almost at dawn.

The fishermen came back from the sea when the sun was already burning. They stretched their nets on the beach, to dry them, and then went to the village passing by the closed tent. The children came down to the meadow as usual, but they did not see the three friends bathing, nor sitting under the pine trees.

The tavern-keeper did not see them until very late, when the heat of the day was over. They sat, as usual, outside the tavern, in the shade of the house. They were more silent than other days, and they looked very tired. They wrote nothing after lunch, nor did 'the Indian' walk around the village with her papers and pencils. Sitting at the door of the tavern until the sun set, they let time pass, smoking and from time to time exchanging some words in a very low voice. Then they went, after buying the customary wine, and returned to the dunes.

Summer was ending with great heat. The fountain in the meadow had dried up completely, and the children did not come down any more with their yellow oxen. There were no more wild lilies in bloom, and the elm trees began to change the color of their leaves.

One night, when the fishermen went out to sea, they saw the three friends preparing a fire near the shore. 'The Indian' fetched twigs in the pine forest, and took them to the beach. That fire would be the last one. Soon they would leave the dunes and go away. The dances in the night, the long silences they shared, the embracing on the sand, the despairing embraces in their craving for mutual confusion, all would end. None of them spoke of the departure, nor did they speak of the night of the last ceremony that Maria hadn't been permitted to see. There had been no more ceremonies from that night on. There had been no more waiting, sitting in the tent, her eyes bound, thinking of the three unique gods that they three were. Maria never enquired. Not knowing what had happened, she felt as if she were keeping a secret, just because she did not know its solution.

But in this hot night of late summer, when they had already repeated the ritual of other times, with the same words, the same

gestures and raptures; when they were crawling on the sand; when the fire had been extinguished for ever, the last fire of summer, one of the friends, his head sunk in the belly of the Indian, said in a very low voice:

'Tonight, there will be ceremony.'

Those words reached Maria, mixed with the noise of the sea. She shuddered in the four arms around her body. And the same voice added, like in a murmur:

'And tonight you may see it.'

And saying this, the blond friend leaped up and ran towards the rocks.

Maria tried to follow him, but the other held her back.

'Don't go. He is preparing himself,' he said.

They both sat by the extinguished fire. The noise of the sea resounded within their heads.

'The ceremony, what is it?' Maria asked.

'It is the coronation. Ask no more.'

But she repeated:

'The ceremony, what is it?'

'It is the liberation. But, please, ask no more.'

Shortly afterwards they heard some steps, and out of the darkness came the friend who had run to the rocks. His eyes were bright, and his lips tightly closed. His clothes were those of the night nobody wanted to remember. He approached them both and took their hands. He was sweating. He embraced them and kissed them on the cheeks.

'I am not afraid any longer,' he said.

He detached himself from them, and walking backwards he went away from them, slowly. He let go their hands, gradually, letting his damp fingers slide over their palms till only their fingertips touched. He went on walking backwards, his arms stretched out towards them, as if beseeching them, till his feet entered the water. Then he turned to the sea, and with his arms rigidly separated from the body, as in prayer, slowly entered the water. His body stood out against the bright surface. He walked very slowly, and little by little his clothing became wet. His hands sank into the water, and left behind them two silver furrows. He walked calmly on, till only his head rose above the surface as if cut off by the blade of the water. Then he disappeared under the sea. A calm wave effaced the last traces of him.

The ceremony was over.

Poems by R. G. Vliet

LADY IF YOU MUST WALK THAT WOOD

Beware of the dark chokecherry
of larkspur nightshade purple monkshood
pale stemmed toadstool and red baneberry

feed only on currants and ripe raspberries

crayfish from a brook. Watch a crow
doesn't peck your crumbtrail or magpies
snatch pebbles behind you as you go
and spiders crisscross mystery in your eyes.

Those woods thicken with each surmise

and if you should become lost Lady
do not at all push with your white
scratched hands against the night Lady

sit under a hemlock unsnarl your hair
hum ditties to whatever grizzly bear

do not at all weep do not at all shout:
I learned this once, and I think I've come out.

SWUNG IN CHAINS OF HER OWN BEAUTY

Hands worked for rings too perfectly

she walks burdened with her worth
lugging the coins of handsome in her skirts.

How shall she move her ingot lips
free mineral talents in her hips

how lift her silver lovely eyes
square from such circles mathematics of surprise?

O lovely lady, who would punish you
so make you too much golden to be true?

Most sing in praise of loveliness:
I clank the iron of your distress.

A Dead Girl Speaks

by Ramona Maher Martinez

Immortal nightingales make hunger merciless;
Bones of the body keep the living sound
Threading the flesh. The dead are thresholdless,
And rain makes mud of mansions of the ground.
I had been dead a year of dour grace;
The door of earth had closed and battened down
With winter snow. Warmed, it dropped like milk
From aphids on my face. Spiders and their ilk
Swam awake. I rose, wild-haired and rotten-gowned.

Like Columbus, I saw the signs of land
And marveled. A twig, an aspen leaf, a track
Of a snail, snooping silver, up and behind
My gravestone. Red ants solemnly packed
To their hill the dregs of a wasp. Undefined,
The day tilted like a drunken zodiac,
And the still sky was suddenly a holocaust
For a girl who had not learned to be a ghost.

But I had promised you I would return,
And scratch on windows, blow your candles out
And crawl in bed with you and help you mourn,
Deliver morning with the paper and a clout
To wake you up, plug in the coffee urn.
I said, 'Oh, you will never banish me
To death; I'll be your underfoot banshee.
In your rosy flesh, I will be your thorn.'

LIFE WAS

Your pad: a wild zoo full of muskrat rambles
And friends who couldn't make the scene
Somehow with him or her and burned black candles,
Drank tea and spilled some on our early Pleistocene
Furniture. They propped their strawhide sandals
On table tops. God, home, and mother lay in smithereens
After a night we dug a cat in a black turban
Blasting off, launched well with holy bourbon.

I died a thousand deaths; like Anne Boleyn,
I felt the blade lick like a lizard's fang
Across my neck. I died like Katharine of Aragon.
And even like a yellow poontang
Girl bleeding her heart out on a tarpaulin.
Hanging high, I spat out my swollen tongue
To think that death has conquered queens and crones;
I raced back to you on my scolded bones.

I think love is a thing peninsular, I said.
Seeing the isthmus of light from your window, I rapped
On the glass of your breath, by your bed.
I think I laughed. Sweet slugabed of dust, you slept,
Unaware that the world is rocked by the dead,
And that alive, you would be curiously inept
At dying when your time came. I wanted to save
You from the hardship of the grave.

The ruin of love is worse than wrack and ruin
Come to flesh. I saw the sleeping girl
Beside you. The alabaster counterpane
Of skin drummed out the sockets, covered the burl
Of knees and elbows. To be a plain Jane
Of bone is bitter. Even the oyster rubs a pearl
Out of his anguish. What on earth
Can a ghost do but recognize her dearth?

Only the earth knows how to love the dead.
The afterlivers are the murderers.
Say, 'Here lies a girl, by moles molested,
Phosphor lends fervor to her final fires.

What if she was my girl? A spade's a spade.
Time will tuck dotage around her last desires.
My love is on this rock for her to read;
What else can my girl need?'

I had been dead a year of dour grace;
The door of earth had closed and battened down.
Plagued with a hunger that was merciless,
I rose like some tall turnip from the ground,
Sloughed dirt off with a grasshopper's carapace,
And trundled home, all gay and gritty-gowned.
Bodiless longing sets no flesh on fire.
An age or so will wear away my name
On granite, and perhaps eat away desire:
Spill stardust into dust from which it came.

So Much for the Oedipus Complex

by Lloyd Frankenberg

My mother could get so quiet sometimes
it was worse than going for you with a hairbrush.
One time she met my father at the hall door
so quietly
the hatrack came halfway up through his derby.

Being good where it wasn't deserved
was my mother's trouble
like giving up a career
for a brother who played for hotel dances and led
choirs and glee clubs
and marrying my father whose wife had died and he drank.

I used to wonder about marrying again.
You shouldn't do it if your first wife was still
living, that was bigamy,
unless she was so bad you had to divorce her and
even that was frowned on,
but if she died it was perfectly all right, even several times.
What happened when they all turned up in heaven?

My mother was always trying to economize
especially on clothes, which she tried to sew herself.
Hats were beyond her
but even the ones she bought in the store
managed to look dowdy by Sunday.

My mother was quite beautiful though
before she went grey.
She went grey in white patches.
The only vanity my mother ever had,
she braided the black over the white.

My mother was a teetotaler so my father was too
but he used to tease her about the time
somebody slipped brandy in the church-social punch
and she kept drinking it and saying 'what delicious punch!'
and got merry and pink and danced and went to sleep.

When my mother, following some precursor of Gesell,
tried to tell me what every little boy should know
she spoke of an experience that some day would come to me
in such a choked voice
I wondered how I'd ever been born.

When my mother got into bed with me
I couldn't let on how uncomfortable it was.
She was so hot.
So much for the Oedipus Complex.
I fell in love with a girl who suffers from the cold.

My mother had a vibrator for headaches
which took a hard black knob, a rubber suction cup or little
rubber fingers.
I used to run these over her forehead, the vibration gave me
a headache.
She was probably trying to reach
the bloodclot that killed her.

Almost an Elopement

by Clifford Wright

SCENE: The back parlor of the Countess Diane's genuine 17th Century French chateau now transplanted to Raleigh, Wyoming.

HOUR: 2.30 Sunday afternoon. A small chamber orchestra is playing contemporary twelve-tone music in the rose garden – it is mid-spring and blue and white butterflies can be seen fluttering about the shrubs through the open French doors on the right side of the stage, the corresponding doors on the left are closed but sunlight is streaming through the glass curtains.

The Countess Diane comes skipping gaily in in a bouffant gown made entirely of little sewn-on violets; she carries a shepherd's crook decked liberally with bows of ribbon and a shepherdess's hat brim full of lilacs and plum blossoms.

COUNTESS DIANE (*flinging herself gracefully down full length on an outsized (double) chaise-longue on the far left of the stage*): Glory be, what an extravagantly spring-feverish long day. What a joy it is to be in out of that hot Wyoming sun that tightens my Mary Pickford curls nearly to extinction! I do really love this sentimental indoor atmosphere to relax in. A skunk is a gentleman who has never heard this story before. (*She beckons with wild abandoned grace to someone offstage right and jumps up and races around the room and then throws herself bouncily back on the chaise-longue.*) Oh Corolla, dear, the hot blood is romping so importunately in my veins that if I weren't a Countess I would be completely at a loss for what to do!

COROLLA CORRINGTON (*entering in a very matter-of-fact flat footed walk of the high-class gymnastic dancer and contortionist. She is a pretty little thing in an almost stout way tightly encased in a black sheath-like satin dress accordianed suddenly loosely immediately at the hips. She is animated but not a flouncer. Sitting herself firmly on a delicate golden chair*): If you keep your mouth shut you can never break your neck in it. I like this discrete little back but elegant parlor of yours Countess, it's conventional and quaint.

COUNTESS DIANE (*flipping open a huge green ostrich plume fan that had been lying on the chaise-longue and waving it wantonly*): Little do most women realize that the American government is a rule of the people, by the people, for the boss.

COROLLA: I would much rather not talk politics Deenie. Both of us are much too young and beautiful to mar our beauty with the crud of boob reality. All women's dresses would nonplus the bravest toreador in Spain, or, beauty in a woman's face is as simple to get as a mosquito bite.

COUNTESS: Come now do let's have unlimited conversation or play some chess or drink some pink champagne or something. (*Bouncing up once more from the chaise-longue the Countess waltzes over to Corolla's chair and puts an oh-so-graceful feminine arm across her shoulders.*)

COROLLA (*shuddering and giggling*): You are so droll in so many incomprehensible ways Deenie!

COUNTESS DIANE (*dragging her laughingly up from the chair – they walk arm in arm back to the chaise-longue and loll back upon it*): Corolla Corrington, with this lovely atonal music buzzing in our ears and with us sitting in one of the most elegant French châteaus imaginable with servants at our beck and call ready to descend on us at any hour of the day or night loaded with tasty viands and dainty liqueurs or whiskey and such if we should need it, and all the money any two people could use up in a lifetime invested in the soundest securities at our command we have a happy future before us. I can't tell you how glad I am, Corolla, that your daddy is the sheriff of this county, it is so handy to have a sheriff somewhere in the background to ward off intruders.

COROLLA: Ain't it the truth, dearie! (*Obviously dazzled by everything.*)

COUNTESS DIANE (*burying her face in the ostrich plume fan*): What good fate do you suppose ever arranged all this good fortune to happen to us? (*Corolla looks around in a puzzled manner.*) Of course we haven't done anything to anybody ever except entertain them in our various professional or non-professional ways and we're both healthy as horses in our individual ways, too. We may eventually die old maids but we do have some consolations. Do you remember that oh-so-handsome shovel man, the blond one with his shirt off glistening with sweat his blond curls all tangled and his breasts gleaming in the sunlight – the one we passed at such a slow rate at the intersection they are repairing on the highway?

COROLLA: You bet I do Deenie. That working cutie was certainly one living doll. It's boys like those that makes it so easy to understand why lace is so expensive even if it is full of holes.

COUNTESS DIANE (*laughing tinklingly and proudly*): Do you suppose he could be persuaded to elope with us if either of us could screw up the courage to ask him to and even mention all our money and kind hearts? I think some of those boys would accept two of us, but how about him?

COROLLA (*leaping up and running over to the French doors that are*

open): He might be waiting for us just over the garden wall right now!

COUNTESS DIANE (*delightfully agitated*): Oh what fun! He couldn't have missed us ogling him from that lavender Dusenberg touring car. Do you suppose he guessed we were the two who lived in the only genuine French château in these parts and came on over, not even waiting for it to be time to quit work? (*Corolla Corrington puts her head between her legs and looks up at the countess archly.*) Naturally he would come alone and not bring any of the other plainer boys with him. It is difficult to say what gives couples like us the most happiness the penalty of success or the penalty of politeness. If that boy hopped over the garden wall right now and strode up to us, Corolla what would you say to him?

COROLLA (*playfully snatching the green ostrich plume fan from the Countess and walking about the stage fanning herself nonchalantly, her head still between her legs*): Yes some huskies are very shy about a lot of things.

COUNTESS DIANE: It is so hard to be patient about things like this. And besides he is probably still out there sweating with his shovel and less godlike cronies and has forgotten all about us entirely and it never even entered that scratchy, cleft-chinned and dimple-cheeked face that we would like him to come visit us for good.

COROLLA (*straightening up and standing on one leg with her other one firmly around her neck*): Yes, that may be true. I am sure he is not inconsiderate but he may lack that particular kind of imagination, alas.

COUNTESS DIANE: We could certainly snatch him out of abject poverty and make him deliriously wealthy – if he would only like that. If he won't come willingly couldn't we – say – kidnap him with the old hypodermic and sack method of the white slaver?

COROLLA (*pulling up a little green-velvet-covered table on wheels from the wings with a shiny metal tripod on it with a thing to affix her perfect teeth to on top*): He could well be very angry and uncooperative when he woke up unless we could pretend we found him in a ditch somewhere and rescued him rather than kidnapped him. In which case we should actually spirit him as far away as Tangiers or somewhere like that so he could not just up and get on a trolley car and go home after thanking us. (*She climbs up on the table, zips off her black dress and is revealed in a brief contortionist's outfit as she clamps her teeth into the mouthpiece and then throws her body slowly over her head.*)

COUNTESS DIANE (*strolling thoughtfully about the stage*): You are right these things must be handled carefully for who knows he might turn out to be very smart or uncooperative once we had him more or less in our power. We certainly wouldn't want to make him do anything he wouldn't want to.

COROLLA (*slowly and spectacularly pulls her body back over her head disengages her mouth and dismounts from the stand with a curtsy*): Yes, wouldn't it be fun to rewrite the story of his life that way or some other way provided he is single and rather bored by the way it has been going already?

COUNTESS DIANE: Yes, let's just pretend, for instance what possibilities we could arrange for him of an entertaining nature if he turned out not to be too unwilling and liked us. We could help him become a self-made man of fantastic proportions. We could take him to savage and desolate places and help him prove himself without letting him realize it. That would bring out his natural kindness and heroic nature and he would probably proudly and patiently let us kiss him a lot after every deed of valor. We could let him help the poor and rescue poor old drunken bums kicked savagely around by insensitive brutes of policemen. We could lead him to several places where poverty and wretchedness had left its mark and teach him how to give those same places polish, culture and taste. We could take him to all the art museums in the world if it doesn't weary him.

COROLLA (*stepping in a business-like fashion to the french-doors that are open and picking up a pair of golden roller-skates*): That handsome brute could have no deficiencies that his entire good looks could not entirely and with no trouble at all make up for, provided of course said deficiencies were of a gentle nature. (*She skates noiselessly about the stage doing a series of spectacular contortionary things.*)

COUNTESS DIANE (*utterly delighted by her friend's gymnastic prowess*): Let us pass up for the moment all the more intimate matters, or should I say pass by? Yes, let's take him for instance to some horrible place in Arkansas where it is sometimes deadly dull I am told and show him how quickly a sack of gold will change the spirit of a place – even the landscape. Or to a mining camp in Alaska and show him where that precious metal comes from and how it is mined if he is interested. Yes, it would be such fun to have this kind of triple love affair provided it all remains on a decorous level! We could even ask him to marry one of us in the end and see what he would say.

COROLLA (*spinning wildly around on her skates now just a kind of knobby lump flashing sequins on the floor*): Ooooooooooooh! (*she stops and rises and curtsies to the Countess*) Wouldn't THAT be fun!
COUNTESS DIANE: After all being an old maid is like death by drowning, AND the more you say the less people care or remember. Oh do let us do all in our power to wring a proposal from that love in the end for one of us!
COROLLA: I am for that proposition 800 percent!
COUNTESS DIANE: I do hope that creature adores effeminate women like me on principle anyhow for it would make things so very much simpler all around.
COROLLA: It is possible that when he realizes that two women of entirely different types are after him he will be non-plussed as well as flattered. If he turns out to be fairly easy to persuade there will be a lot of zest to the pursuit as I see it anyhow. (*She unstraps her roller-skates and puts them back where she found them by the french-doors, then she pulls in a very tall unicycle from the garden and mounts it deftly and rides around the stage, sometimes stopping stock still and backing up a little and then going on.*)
COUNTESS DIANE (*lighting a cigarette in a long ivory holder*): Whenever a lady visits a European cathedral, a long-sleeved dress (no slacks!) and a head scarf are an *absolute necessity*! If a girl is careful she need not be taken for a 'hostess' unless she is the ugliest, frowsiest, most repellent girl in the world, hard, shrill, with a couple of gold teeth and dresses like Sadie Thompson, slaps on cosmetics with a bricklayer's trowel, and has a faster eye for a buck than a Strasbourg banker – a real dog and a greedy one at that.
COROLLA (*teetering high on the unicycle*): My name is Corolla Corrington and I have toured all the European capitals with vast success and I have a trunkful of eulogistic press clippings and hôtel stickers from all over the world to prove it.
COUNTESS DIANE: (*serenely making graceful swanlike gestures with her left hand and arm*) Corolla Corrington, you are indeed a great artist in your difficult field and you deserve every second of the riotous successes that you have had.
COROLLA (*hopping off her unicycle and bowing*): I have never been kicked out of any place ever for anything. Though tougher than most I am everywhere accepted as the perfect lady my mother taught me to be. I have been often in love with soldiers and sailors and artists of various kinds and the like and yet I have never been

poor. Poverty is a distressing fact that can often wear on a lady. I admit I do like vulgarity in its place and I do like pretty clothes; I am thirty-eight years old, though people say I never look it. If I feel in love with a man I would follow him to the ends of the world and get him and still it would be in no sense a disreputable amour. Who was it that said 'Put sugar and cream on a fly and it tastes very much like a raspberry'?

COUNTESS DIANE: But let's get back to the subject at hand, to wit that lovely working cutie of the highway gang that may well now be ready to vault the wall into our garden there. (*Both girls turn eagerly to the french-windows and then drop their arms with little wistful sighs and look sympathetically at each other.*)

COROLLA: How many millions do you suppose he would sell himself to us for at the very rock bottom? Of course we shouldn't tell him how much we are prepared to pay at first, should he be interested.

COUNTESS DIANE: Oh a shy boy like that would not think in terms of even one million right at first and if he is the rough but brash type he would probably not want any money at all that wasn't his own. We would have to figure out some way so that we could make him rich after we had introduced ourselves – some way that he would think he got it in a raffle or something. But of course we must take care to have charmed him sufficiently by that time so he wouldn't suddenly decide to run off after somebody else more entertaining.

COROLLA (*visibly shaken*): My goodness, no, lets show him all our best sides before we let him win the money!

COUNTESS DIANE: If that boy right now should leap over our wall and run up to you and say Corolla Corrington, I love you; I am a simple unsophisticated but burly brute; will you marry me? What would you say?

COROLLA: Why 'this is much too sudden', of course, but I would smile in a markedly friendly fashion as I was saying it.

COUNTESS DIANE: I am sure he would have a perfectly divine sexy name like Dirk Boots or something, don't you agree? But I do remember meeting once a boy named Roloff Beny who was really very sweet. (*Fanning herself again.*)

COROLLA: I had an uncle whose name was LaVerne Paradise and he was indeed heaven. He was an adopted child and his mother was a Lapp and his father an English baronet.

COUNTESS DIANE: How surprising you are, my dear.

COROLLA (*dragging in a box filled with gleaming Indian clubs in multi colors from the doors to the garden and directly setting a great number of them in motion*): Have you discovered, Countess that your possession of millions makes you as sought after as you would expect it to? It must be that a lot of very nice people like you for your money.

COUNTESS DIANE: Yes I suppose it would be difficult to figure out where love for me leaves off and love for my money begins, but who cares as long as I don't ever lose my money?

COROLLA: I like your habit of keeping piles of precious stones of all kinds, even the more ordinary ones like diamonds, emeralds and rubies discreetly piled here and there about the house. I don't suppose you ever bother to count them, do you?

COUNTESS DIANE: Of course not Corolla that would hardly be fair. (*The countess strolls once more elegantly around the stage.*)

COROLLA: Then it is all arranged if this lovely young man should show up? (*letting the Indian clubs all fall back into the basket and deftly kicking the lid shut.*)

COUNTESS DIANE (*haughtily but sweetly*): I'm not called Diane of the Silvery Crescent Moon for nothing, my dear! We just must remember to be dignified enough with him all the time so as his growing familiarity will not degenerate into impertinence. Frankness has its limits, when those are reached we can quickly conduct him to the ballroom.

COROLLA: Your family has all been royal for centuries hasn't it Countess? And there have been lots of emperors and archbishops here and there.

COUNTESS DIANE: Why yes, I guess so. (*The countess is becomingly diffident about it and looks around her unconcernedly.*)

COROLLA: Your brother is very high in the American government is he not, not withstanding he is of extremely royal blood. I suppose he has to keep that quite a secret so as not to hurt the others' feelings, doesn't he?

COUNTESS DIANE: Oh yes my brother is very modest and kind.

COROLLA: Well my father was hardly a gentleman although as I mentioned before we do have some good fancy blood in our family, too. My father drank only rarely and then in secret. I will never forget the time my mother found his feet sticking out of the chicken coop one morning, poor lamb.

COUNTESS DIANE: We will both be so dreadfully disappointed if this boy doesn't turn out to be any of the lovely things we have

been hoping he will be. You know we really should have been a little more careful to let him know our address. And what if he is too shy or too polite to scale our garden wall? My what if some of the other workmen might have told him about your father being sheriff, unless he happens to be a very adventurous sort indeed it might deter him from trespassing into our garden. And if he was told and simply out of bravado jumped the wall he probably wouldn't be quite the kind of boy we are after anyhow for he would be much more interested in being naughty than actually getting to us.

COROLLA: Your fancy family wouldn't care if you married just an ordinary workman if he is a veritable Adonis in any kind of clothing would they?

COUNTESS DIANE: My goodness no, they would all be delighted for me and would all come over and ogle him a lot whenever I would let them which would be reasonably often.

COROLLA: Well if he eventually wants to marry me it certainly won't just be a matter of self defense, though I must confess I am singularly drawn to that nifty job. Honestly, I am sure I could make him as good a wife as anybody else and I would give him absolutely anything he wants immediately when he asked for it – as soon as I could get it if it turned out to be something hard to come by. (*the countess bursts out laughing happily*) Does my consideration for my so-far phantom bridegroom tickle your fancy?

COUNTESS DIANE: Yes, I adore you, Corolla, you are so avid and such a dear and perennially hopeful type. I am sure that boy, if he shows up will be a gent of genuinely chivalrous feelings and will treat you in every way as gently and generously as you plan to treat him.

COROLLA: I doubt it but I sure hope so.

COUNTESS DIANE: But let's talk of me. Do you think he would be grateful if I told him I just had a day-dream about him being ice-skating and falling through a hole in the ice and being rescued at great risk to myself, not a robust girl and certainly no swimmer?

COROLLA: But Countess this is mid-spring and it might be difficult for him to imagine ice. Why don't you have a day-dream about rescuing him from the bottom of a dank well where he had fallen through some rotten boards.

COUNTESS DIANE: I hardly think, my dear, I could pull a big muscular doll like that out of a well unless it were full clean to the brim and then he could crawl out himself. I could drag him out

of the hole in the ice if I lay on my stomach and inched my way toward him and then just barely reached him my hand as he was gasping and going under for the third time. I could pull him out over the ice because he could help himself a little but he would have little chance of getting out of that fix completely unassisted.
COROLLA: Okay, Countess, I see your point. When you had saved him would you two elope right away or would you wait for the newspaper stories? In the meantime maybe I could have found myself a sea captain. He wouldn't be as handsome as our Dirk, though, but he would be a good man and not exactly ugly either, unless he was the sexily ugly type that certainly does exist.
COUNTESS DIANE: I don't want to make any completely hollow remarks if I can help it but I always say the husband who desires surprise is often the rascal to live with.
COROLLA: WELL?
COUNTESS DIANE: How many times have you refused to elope when a man has really begged you to do so?
COROLLA: Nobody has ever asked me to elope yet but if they ever do I can tell you right now I will be game.
COUNTESS DIANE: (*fervently*) Me, too!
COROLLA: Certainly there have been times in your life when you found yourself very fond of people and even in rather complicated relationships with them?
COUNTESS DIANE: Oh yes four or five times things got very complicated. Oh my, very complicated indeed. My nerves are not too strong you know due to so much royal blood in my veins and these relationships can be mighty gruelling one way or another. If you love a person so very much it does simplify things if you have the money to give them everything they want. It makes things cleaner when it ends, too for you both just go your ways, sad for the moment surely, but able to take a trip around the world to forget the heartbreak while meeting other new and charming people.
COROLLA: I fancy it must be pleasant to be loved back by royalty.
COUNTESS DIANE (*with her eyes twinkling*): You do me too much honor, Corolla Corrington.
COROLLA (*suddenly leaping up and doing a chain of cartwheels and then handsprings across the stage*): Next best to being of royal blood oneself is to be the closest friends of royalty. Where do you want to spend your declining years, in America?

COUNTESS DIANE: Oh my no, America is no place to die in. I know I would like to die in some rocky place like Greece and near the ocean. I would like to spend my last years where it is hot and clear in the day time on precipitous shores with little white sandy beaches here and there. And it must be cold at night so you can enjoy a fireplace fire and the previously warmed blankets of a not too soft bed.
COROLLA: Do you remember Sax Rohmer's Fu-Manchu books, Countess? Weren't they heaven? They made some perfectly heavenly movies out of them, too, we must get a batch of them for our private film library. I can't think why it hasn't occurred to me before.
COUNTESS DIANE: Yes, you remember how creepy those books were and how villanous so very many people were in them with violence all the time and drugs and ladies being kidnapped by men of other races?
COROLLA: Is it true a bachelor never quite gets over the idea that a husband is what is left of a man when the nerve has been extracted?
COUNTESS DIANE: Yes, don't they say even the ugliest human exteriors sometimes contain the most beautiful viscera?
COROLLA: To get back to our possible Dirk Boots, how best do you think could we dazzle him with magnificence without possibly scaring him away?
COUNTESS DIANE: Well here in the home we could just pretend that we were staying here while our uncle who owns the establishment is off in Africa shooting lions and things and that we are from Humptulips, Washington and away from home for the first time and simply dazzled ourselves by the grandeur and rubies and diamonds and emeralds and such lying around and keep on playing it that way until he starts to like it and then we can break it to him easily that our uncle is really fictitious and I am a countess and you are a famous contortionist and whatever.
COROLLA: It may be vulgar to desire to dazzle that boy with magnificence but do lets use that method if it will work.
COUNTESS DIANE: Yes that would be a delightful caprice. (*The countess lolls back once more on the huge chaise-longue.*)
COROLLA: I remember a fairy-tale that told of how a prince and a princess, both ravishingly handsome were both transformed into manhole covers by a monstrous magical tinker who one day got his just comeuppence when he was struck by lightening and burned to a crisp amongst his pots and pans.

COUNTESS DIANE: Yes, and what became of the prince and princess?
COROLLA: Oh I guess they just stayed manhole covers for the story ended there – very Germanic don't you think?
COUNTESS DIANE: Ah—
COROLLA: I remember a little jingle, too; (*But the countess raises her hand peremptorily.*)
COUNTESS DIANE: Ah Corolla do remember the one rule of this house, no poetry until after four and its only three-fifteen now (*pointing to the grandfather's clock standing in the right corner of the room*). I never can remember whether it is poetry or French that is said to be the true and native language of insincerity.
COROLLA (*going to the grandfather's clock and opening the door to its pendulum-box and extracting a rope which she proceeds to spin deftly as she dons a cowboy hat and sapphire chaps extracted from the same cabinet*).
COUNTESS DIANE: Did your daddy also teach you to shoot?
COROLLA: Oh yes, I can shoot the warts off even the tiniest toad at a hundred and ninety paces.
COUNTESS DIANE: You are so accomplished Corolla Corrington that if I weren't such a lady I would be very jealous of you.
COROLLA: Who was the most unpleasant person you ever met?
COUNTESS DIANE: Well, offhand, nobody stands out particularly except an evil-tempered ruffian in Saratoga Springs who threw me in a swamp repeatedly one night for private reasons of his own.
COROLLA: How repulsive! (*As the lariat revolves around her and goes up and down over her body*).
COUNTESS DIANE: No he wasn't really repulsive, rather handsome as a matter of fact, but obviously one of those problem people. But I am sure he meant well and I must have said something he fancied a slight, though I certainly didn't mean to.
COROLLA (*ends the rope twirling with a snap and again in a business-like way puts the ropes and chaps and hat back in the clock cupboard*): Has your family always had so much money? (*Seats herself next to C.D. on chaise-longue.*)
COUNTESS DIANE (*putting her aristocratic arm gently around Corolla*): Oh yes as far back as our family tree can be traced which is way before the Crusades our family has simply rolled in wealth of all kinds. We always made it oddly enough because of artists in our family. The men have always been extremely talented and well connected and each generation has found its place in the higher

money echelons where these expensive products are always a necessity and since we have always had so much money that it has been hard to squander enough of it to make any difference anyway. We have known sorrow and despair but never the lack of money. Fortune is notoriously capricious snatching delirious wealth away from those who have it and foisting it on those who don't have it and sometimes even say they don't want it. Personally I don't find I have ever minded having my footsteps dogged by gold. I love to live ritzily and wear pretty clothes and live in elegant châteaus or castles whenever possible which is practically all the time in my case. I have never smelt the fetid breathe of poverty and needless to say I don't want to for I know it would get under my skin considerably, but it doesn't seem at all likely that I will have to face that dreary prospect ever.

COROLLA: Oh tell me more about how you love money!

COUNTESS DIANE (*graciously, looking down sympathetically at Corolla*): We have had so many, many times together and you have always been truthful and frank with me and have lost your temper seldom and then only when a bucket of paint was spilled on you or when somebody else's clumsiness got you caught in a revolving door for all the passing world to snigger at. If you were a man I certainly would have asked you to marry me long ago, but since you aren't I am not even going to do so now. Happiness, I trust will be both our lots and whoever wins this hero if he does finally show up deserves him. If I get him in the end I want you to think kindly of me. (*The Countess rises and stretches out her firm white arm to Corolla and lifts her to her feet and they move arm in arm to center stage and stop.*) And if you get him I will pat you both on the back and say more power to you even though it must be said through gritting teeth, for after all he is a remarkable working cutie after all. And now shall we go lap up some expensive viands?

COROLLA (*archly*): What if we both get him, Deenie?

COUNTESS DIANE: Time will aquaint us of that perfect solution to our problem if Mr. X will hurry up and show up. (*Moving across the front of the stage together.*)

COROLLA: Yes we shall be nine days' wonders indeed if we can carry off our little scheme in any of the ways we have so far proposed or any others that might come to mind.

COUNTESS DIANE: There is of course always the method of stating the case plainly to him with bank statements and all right from the start. He might actually be a very sophisticated man of

the world who is only working at such menial tasks so as to keep in touch with how workmen talk and live and to keep his superb muscle tone intact. Then we could immediately take him on a long boat trip and everything would be simplicity itself.

COROLLA: That would certainly take no consideration at all. Oh yes, it would be charming if he doesn't have to put up any kind of fight. (*Releasing her arm from the countess' and turning so as to hold hands at arms length.*)

COUNTESS DIANE: What if he should ask us to find him a wife not thinking of either of us for a minute as the marrying kind?

COROLLA: Impossible!

COUNTESS DIANE: You are probably right for we probably look as though we would marry the proper person if asked. We certainly would give him carte blanche in a minute, now wouldn't we? Perhaps we could get him to choose one of us in a blind-man's buff game – that's a fun game to play anyway.

COROLLA: We could treat him to a lot of beau-catching little preliminaries, too, that would soon subtly point up the fact that we are interested in having him come stay and travel with us where ever he would like to go.

COUNTESS DIANE: You don't intend to ask him if maybe another one of the boys from the road-gang might want to come along?

COROLLA: Well, there wasn't another there today to compare to him in looks but there well might be a loyal and intelligent one around he could recommend.

COUNTESS DIANE: Even one that you could take out in society?

COROLLA: Preferably. As long as he knows how to spend money I am sure he will be alright with me. I am not exactly the governess or country parson's daughter type now am I?

COUNTESS DIANE: Do you suppose anyone looking on would think we are what might be called voracious for men? (*Moving back to the chaise-longue languidly*)

COROLLA: Countess Diane, we aren't hunting, pestering, worrying or persecuting that boy. He probably is back there at the intersection completely unaware that we are alive – he is probably chinning with his pals happily about some breach of promise actions he has been involved in. It will probably take a very energetic and unprincipled woman indeed to capture him if one hasn't done so to his satisfaction already. Anyhow he is probably a bully. Though when I think on him now I can see by some people it might be a pleasure to be bullied for the rest of my days. When I

think of him perhaps this red hot minute begging his buddies to find him a wife I raise a despairing cry.

COUNTESS DIANE: Oh how deliciously painful it would be for us to think of what the proper kind of woman would be for him – what qualifications do you suppose she should have?

COROLLA: Oh I am sure he wouldn't require money. Just that she be reasonably pretty and cooperative and merciful when the occasion arose.

COUNTESS DIANE: A corn-fed country girl would probably make him very happy is she were docile and healthy. She probably wouldn't even have to play the piano much. Do you suppose, by the way, that in the midst of my wealth I should be sorry for those who are poor?

COROLLA (*nods*): Yes, of course Deenie, and you are – (*moving over to the spindly elegant gold chair and looking longingly out into the garden at the garden wall*).

COUNTESS DIANE: I am absolutely confident that we could choose the perfect wife for him between the two of us, Corolla, and there is no need to torture ourselves further.

COROLLA: Yes, we will help each other and him in all this and his choice will be final.

COUNTESS DIANE: Absolutely! (*The countess grasps her shepherd's crook and rises regally from the chaise-longue, takes Corolla's hand and as they move slowly toward the open french-doors the Countess Diane raps her crook smartly on the floor and it breaks into flowers as the curtain falls.*)

Music starts Granados 'Gardens In Spain' until the curtain falls.

CURTAIN

Notes on Contributors

Bernard Buffet, the celebrated French painter.

Sydney Cheatle, born in Dublin, 1936, studied architecture for five years. Plays trombone in and writes music for modern jazz groups. Is writing a novel *The Song of the Goat*, from which *Moonglass*, printed in this issue, is taken.

Mark Clark is a young English painter and sculptor.

Gregory Corso's first novel, *All Things are Sustained in Being*, will be published by the Olympia Press in Paris. The novel's first chapter appears in this issue. His first volume of poems has been brought out this year by New Directions.

David Cornel DeJong is a well-known American poet.

Reuel Denney, is a sociologist who teaches at the University of Chicago, part author with David Riesman, of *The Lonely Crowd*.

Babette Deutsch's poems have appeared in many magazines and anthologies.

Leslie Fiedler, distinguished writer and poet, is a professor at the University of Montana.

George Garrett of the Department of English, Wesleyan University, has published poetry, a volume of short stories and a novel *The Finished Man*.

Martin Green, an English writer, born in 1927 has lived in France, Turkey and now in America, 'in voluntary exile'. His book *A Mirror for Anglo-Saxons* has been published by Harpers in New York and Longmans are issuing it in London in February 1961.

Samuel Hazo teaches English at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh; his work has appeared in *New World Writing*, *Commonweal* and other magazines. His *Discovery and other Poems* was published by Sheed and Ward in America in 1959.

Eric Hebborn is a young painter from Maldon, Essex, now on a Prix de Rome at the British Academy.

Nick Joaquin was born in Manila in 1917 and is at present a journalist there. He has lived in America and in Spain and published a collection of Prose and Poetry in the Philippines in 1953.

Luis P. León is a young Spanish writer and *The Ceremony* is his first published piece.

Saadat Hasan Manto, who died in 1955 at the age of 42, was generally acclaimed the greatest short-story writer in Urdu. He produced 300 stories, radio plays and essays, mostly about prostitutes, alcoholics and criminals. He was born in the Punjab and lived in north India till Partition, when he chose to settle in Lahore, Pakistan. Hamid Jalal, his translator, is his nephew.

RAMONA MAHER MARTINEZ writes in the *New Mexico Quarterly*.

JAMES MERRILL, born in New York, 1926, now lives in Stonington, Conn. Has published two books of verse and a novel *The Seraglio* (1957).

EWART MILNE was born in Dublin, has been teacher, seaman and farm worker. His poetry has appeared in a number of American, British and Irish magazines and Hutchinson will publish a volume of his selected poems early in 1961.

AMOS MOSSENSON was born in 1927 and has had personal experience of life in a 'kibbutz'. *The Return of the Pioneer* was first published in Hebrew, in the magazine *Al Hamishar*.

MERVYN PEAKE is internationally known as a leading British artist. He is also a poet and the author of a trilogy of 'Gothic' novels, *Titus Groan* (1946); *Gormenghast* (1950) and *Titus Alone* (1959).

V. S. PRITCHETT is a regular contributor of criticism to the *New Statesman*. He has written several novels – the last was *Mr. Beluncle* – and several volumes of short stories. He lives in London and has a new book of short stories coming out next year.

WILLIAM SAYRES is an American writer whose first novel was published by Simon and Schuster in 1959.

NANCY SULLIVAN lives at Narragansett, Rhode Island, and teaches English at Brown. Her poems have been published in *Accent*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Chelsea Review*, and many other journals.

TREZ, born Treyez, lives in Paris and has illustrated two juveniles written by his wife. His cartoons appear also in *Evergreen Review*.

R. G. VLIET lives in Meadville, Pa.

ARNOLD WESKER is the well-known London playwright, whose trilogy, *Chicken Soup and Barley*, *Roots* and *I'm Talking About Jerusalem*, was re-staged by the Royal Court Theatre, London during the summer of 1960. Jonathan Cape publishes the plays in book form.

ANTHONY C. WEST, an Irish writer living in Wales, has published a book of short stories, *River's End*. (MacGibbon and Kee.)

ROGER WOLCOTT, a young American of 24, was educated at Harvard and now lives in Europe.

BERNARD WOLFE, who designed the cover, is Art Director of the *Daily American* and lives in Rome.

CLIFFORD WRIGHT is an American artist who lives in Denmark.

RUTH LANDSHOFF YORCK lives in Manhattan and has published stories and poems in many literary magazines. Her latest book, a novel entitled *So Cold the Night*, was brought out by Harpers.

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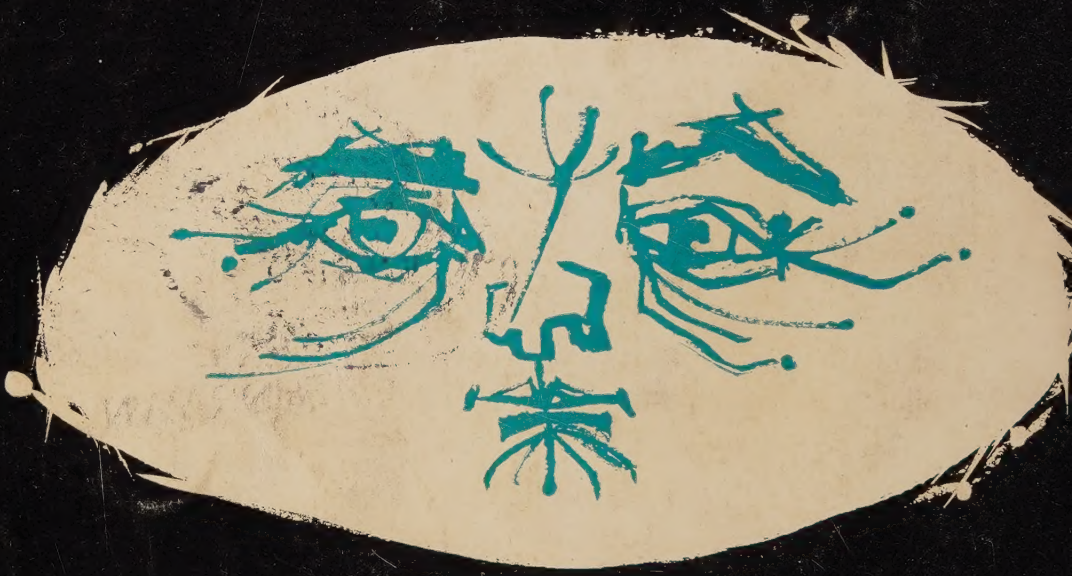
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